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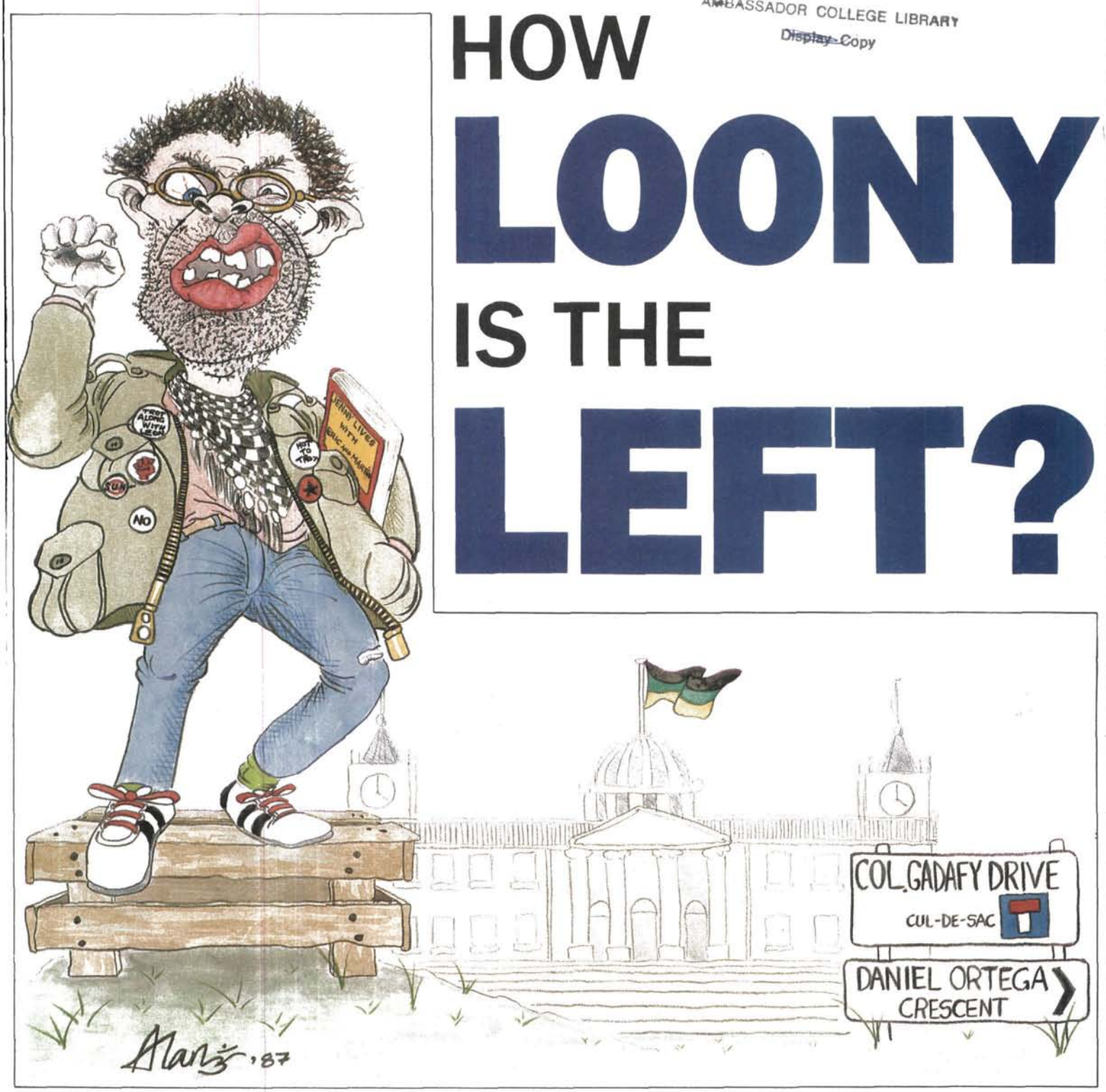

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 113 No 2911 9 January 1987

CONTENTS

FEATURES

Kim Howells: Harwell Diary 4
News 5
Peter Kellner: Can Kinnock woo and win the voters in time? 7
Jolyon Jenkins: How loony is the left? 8
News on Sunday replies to ex-editor-in-chief John Pilger; **John Rentoul** on the background to the bust-up 12
Geoffrey Goodman: Will *any* paper support Labour? 14
Rob Edwards: How we can learn to dismantle nuclear power 15
Geoffrey Bindman: Havering over 'Arab pigs' 17
John Goddard: The North-South rift yawns wider 18
Christopher Hitchens: Oliver North's 'dream' 19
Peter Hennessy: Storms in Whitehall's tea cups 20
Tony Catterall: Why the SPD is going down in West Germany 21
Jonathan Mirsky: China's students on the march 22

ARTS

Charles Fox: Jazz in France 23
Naseem Khan: Work in progress on art in restaurants 24
Victoria Radin: Theatre 24
Hugo Williams: Television 25
Judith Williamson: Cinema 26

BOOKS

Martin Chalmers: Translation 27
John Spurling: Impressionism 28
Michèle Roberts: Poetry 29
David Gilmour: History of Sicily 30
Richard Deveson: Fiction 30
Paul Binding: Mishima 30
Michelene Wandor: Aphra Behn 31
Lachlan Mackinnon: Poem 31

BACKCHAT

Stephen Brook: Wine 36
Jeremy Harding: Dangerous daydreams 36
Crossword 37
Weekend Competition 38
Ralph Edney 39
Chess: George Botterill 39
This England 39

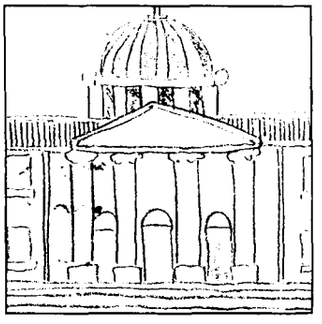
PLUS

Roger Woddis 4
Christian Clark 19
Letters 32

NEXT WEEK

Our (delayed) report on BL's future: does it have one and does it speak Japanese?
Plus
Godfrey Hodgson on the 'special relationship', the Diary goes to Birmingham and David Edgar on how the miners' strike is being turned into history

It *is* a weakness



WE HIGHLIGHT this week (news p5, cover story p8) the local authorities, seen as one of Labour's weak points by an electioneering government. No point in denying it: they can be.

The more publicised area of local government is the worst reason why it is controversial. As Jolyon Jenkins's piece makes clear, much of the 'loony left' campaign, orchestrated by the right-wing tabloids with a disregard for truth (fairness isn't in the frame) should shame the journalists who contributed to it. It has seen fantasies reported as news, and proposals reported as decisions. It has deliberately fostered the impression that all Labour councils are in the grip of lunacy, when most are struggling to maintain services and employment in the face of rate grant cuts and huge unemployment in the inner cities.

An index of the problems now being faced by local authorities was revealed earlier this week, as part of the inauguration of International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. In Britain, some 100,000 people are now classified as homeless; that is twice the mid-1970s total. Some 160,000 people are living in bed and breakfast accommodation, compared with less than 50,000 in 1979: 4m houses are sub-standard and a further 1m unfit to live in. So strapped are councils for cash to discharge their statutory responsibilities that a new scheme — called Home Aid — has been launched to build up a fund to assist the homeless by asking everyone to give at least £5 from the proceeds of the sale of their house to self-help schemes in the UK and overseas. It's a laudable initiative but it's chilling that it has to be charitable.

The worry for Labour in the 'loony left' area is that some councils are concerned to challenge prejudice, or even simply beliefs which they do not hold, with a series of policies which are bound to raise the hackles of the prejudiced and unprejudiced alike, and thus bound to make worse the situation the councils wish to improve. To start from the assumption that all whites are racist is a kind of modern-day Calvinism from which the non-racists can expect no redemption. To invite Sinn Fein councillors to address council chambers is unambiguous backing for people who support the Provisional IRA's campaign of terror.

The more serious reason why some local authorities are a weak point is, so far, the least publicised — but it will be. The Audit Commission will soon publish its report on local authorities, which will, unusually, compare the performance of three separate groups of eight councils, all of them hard pressed. Of these, some 16 — 12 of them Labour controlled — are performing as well or better than can be expected under the circumstances.

But the remaining eight, all Labour-held inner London boroughs, are the core of the problem. Using already-published audits of their performance, which have been checked by the councils' staffs, the Audit Commission's exercise is expected to show that they are increasingly bad at delivering services, and have large rent and rates arrears. This is not the stuff of right-wing fantasy: this is the reality of failure to do the best for people in the worst conditions.

One cause of this, understood to be mentioned in the Commission's report, is a breakdown of relations between councillors and officials: the turnover of senior officials, as of head teachers, in some inner London boroughs is now very great. The 'politicisation' of former bureaucratic work is seen as responsible for delay and confusion, as councillors chairing committees take virtually day-to-day control of their areas of responsibility: arguably at least as important is the ability of finance and legal officers to take much higher paying jobs in the City.

Where the elected councillors are contributing to inefficiency and delay, that must be publicised, recognised and improved. The Conservative government cannot be properly attacked for making war on the most vulnerable in society if Labour authorities are not seen to be doing their best to defend and assist them. □

Dr John Cunningham

IN AN article (*NS* 16 May 86) by Jules Lubbock we criticised the performance of Dr John Cunningham as Labour's environment spokesman. Certain phrases used in that article associated Dr Cunningham with discreditable events from the past history of the Labour Party, with which John Cunningham had nothing to do. We accept that these references were unjustified and needlessly offensive to him. We are also glad to acknowledge that Dr Cunningham has on many occasions effectively led informed and critical debate in the House of Commons and elsewhere of the Government's Environmental Policies, with particular reference to urban decay and poverty in the Inner Cities.

We apologise unreservedly to Dr Cunningham for any embarrassment caused to him by our article and have paid him a substantial sum by way of damages which he intends to donate to a cause beneficial to the Labour Party together with his legal costs.

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HARWELL DIARY

As we cross Berkshire's western frontier my companion observes that it's like travelling through a foreign country. He's right. His pit closed a year previously and his valley has some of the poorest housing stock in Europe. Here, the road to the Harwell Atomic Energy Research is lined with evidence of a general prosperity which is rapidly becoming little more than a memory in the mining valleys of South Wales.

A great storm has moved ahead of us, leaving the approach to Harwell bathed in a raw crystal light, entirely appropriate for the occasion. 'The dawn of a new era,' mumbles my companion as we find our way blocked by barbed wire, chainlink fencing and a policeman who looks as if he survived the full frontal impact of a trainful of nuclear flasks. He tells us we've checked into the wrong gate and points north, towards the Cockcroft Building where, he says, the 'education lot' will be waiting for us.

Sure enough, a benign-looking physicist guides us into the lecture theatre where about 100 other trade union officials sit, in unnatural silence, waiting for the first lecture, as if they know already that we've all received a massive dose of some exotic radiation which turns everyone affected into pro-nuke zombies. We're here on Harwell's invitation to learn to love nuclear power.

Confirmation of this arrives an hour later in the form of four shop stewards representing some of the 7,000 people who work at Harwell. Pete, Dennis, Harry and Ted stand around the podium like a nuclear quartet, backing their messianic lead singer/scientists who praise the nuclear process as if, without it, there will be no tomorrow. The whole place smells of religion and self-righteousness.

○

But the temples are tatty: corrugated tin roofs; World War Two hangars, converted to house God-knows-what; profoundly worrying bunkers sprouting aerials and Portakabins and luminous arrows underneath signs which read 'Criticality Alarm'. Tucked away in one corner of the site is an area set aside, our guide informs us, for research and development of 'renewable' sources of energy. It turns out to contain a clutter of scabby, rusting windmills, some of which are wrapped in polythene — as if the poor bugger in charge of windmill research had given up the ghost and decided to become a creator of surrealist soft sculptures.

○

Back in the lecture theatre, everyone's gloom is intensified during an hour-long examination of the Chernobyl accident. Our lecturer, Alan Eggleton, is refreshingly deadpan and refrains from reassuring us (as everyone else does at Harwell) every two minutes that it 'couldn't possibly ever happen here . . .' (obligatory patronising smile). In question-time, one of Eggleton's colleagues leaps to his feet to inform the delegates that Eggleton had meant to say nuclear 'excursion', not nuclear 'explosion', when referring to the moment at which Chernobyl No 4 ruptured. Eggleton stares at the ceiling and starts nodding his head like a sinner who's suddenly remembered his gospel in the bar of a brothel. We all sigh with relief. It's not that we're opposed to hearing the truth. It's just that none of us can bear to contemplate the idea of these guys falling out with one another when they're pulling the levers on all those neutron machines and Zennon poison test-rigs.

○

Equanimity and global perspective return with a terribly nice chap called Peter Saunders who makes the 21st century energy gap sound positively charming. He's Harwell's ace-in-the-hole. He kicks clean into touch the idea of a major, 'major', advance in energy production from renewable sources; advises conservation in the burning of oil and natural gas and then disarms us by praising the coal industry to high-heaven before zapping us with the horrors of the 'greenhouse effect': 'Coal's fine,' he says, smiling like a dentist who is about to rip out your remaining teeth, 'until burning it causes so much excess CO_2 that the ice caps melt.'

He flicks a switch and a huge pattern of coloured boxes appears on a screen above him. They represent the remaining world reserves of energy, dominated by a gigantic box entitled 'Uranium'. Gas, oil and coal look miserably insignificant — like old Wall Street churches dwarfed by corporate skyscrapers — until you realise that there are not one, but *two* boxes under the title Uranium: an insignificant one called 'Thermal' and a vast one surrounding it called 'Fast Breeder'.

My companion whispers: 'Fast breeders: those are the bastards which take about ten seconds to go critical, aren't they?' But Saunders is in full flow; he's got the nuclear hwyl and suddenly every problem in the world is going to be solved by bathing it in enriched uranium. 'Wind power': he snarls, narrowing his eyes like James Mason used to, 'to supply enough electricity for London from wind power would require a windmill-farm site five times the size of the whole city.' Solar power he dismisses as being primarily a Californian tax fiddle and the prospects of commercial fusion-power are 'extremely remote'.

○

Over lunch I am informed by a Margaret Thatcher look-alike sitting opposite me that she finds my scepticism '*so* sad'. If only people would try to understand, she says, that Harwell 'harbours no secrets'. Twenty minutes later, she and everyone else in our coach dutifully holds up plastic identification cards so that PC Mangled Mug can be satisfied that none of us is nicking any of those non-existent 'secrets' or any of the 'perfectly safe' substances about which we've heard so many hymns through the day.

○

Before the climax of the visit — an opportunity to clamber onto the lid of an ancient heavy water reactor called Pluto — we listen to Ian Blair of NIREX who describes himself as a nuclear dustman. He compares the lengthy procedures NIREX has to undergo (before it can build nuclear waste dumps) with the easy job enjoyed by its French counterpart. The French, he says, 'don't bother to consult the frog before they drain the swamp.'

Ian obviously uses this pun as part of a song-and-dance routine to wake Pete — one of Harwell's pet shop stewards whom we met earlier. Pete leaps to his feet to assure us all that he'd willingly sleep on a nuclear waste dump if only his wife would let him.

It was the last image which stayed with us longest as we drove back west, into the setting sun: '. . . itself an ongoing nuclear situation, bringing untold benefits to mankind'. My companion expressed deep sympathy for Pete's wife: 'That's what long-term exposure to radiation does for you, Kim. After a while it makes you start believing everything your boss tells you. Before you know where you are, you end up sleeping on the job.'

Kim Howells

Kim Howells is the research officer for the National Union of Mineworkers, South Wales area.

ROGER WODDIS

The Resolute Leader

The publication this week of the Department of Employment's job census, coupled with the polls reversal, reduces the likelihood of Mrs Thatcher calling a spring election

The Gallup poll appeared to wreck
Neil's hope of claiming victory;
Now MORI puts us neck-and-neck
Which I find contradictory.

I am resolved — I make this pledge
And with profound sincerity —
To set the nation's teeth on edge
By talking of prosperity.

I am resolved to cast aside
The weak who fling their flak at me
For widening the Great Divide,
And quote St Francis back at me.

I shall lay all such critics low
And call their motives sinister;
The right response is never 'No',
But always 'Yes, Prime Minister'.

With firm resolve to win the vote
By strength of will and piety,
I shall continue to promote
The far-queue-Jack society.

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A little local difficulty

RELATIONS between Labour's front bench and a group of prominent left-wing council leaders are strained close to breaking point on the eve of publication next week of the Party's consultative document on local authorities. Shadow treasurer Roy Hattersley and shadow environment spokesperson John Cunningham were infuriated by a report in the *Guardian* on Monday which claimed that the Party leaders had staved off a 'council mutiny' by agreeing to allocate as much as £2bn from the £6bn earmarked for job creation to cover the debts built up by high-spending authorities who have used 'creative accounting techniques' to postpone a day of reckoning on cuts in staff and services.

No such deal has been agreed. Instead, next week's consultative document will contain an anodyne paragraph in its section on finance talking of the need to relax capital controls and saying that where extra resources could be made available, attention would need to be paid to those councils which had mortgaged their future on the hope of a Labour government. No figures are given.

Labour is bracing itself for a report from the Audit Commission, due out in the next few weeks, on local authorities. The *Sunday Times* revealed on 21 December that the report would name eight London Labour-controlled boroughs — Brent, Camden, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark — as all being 'on the brink of collapse' because of uncollected rates and rents, and services undelivered. The report is the more damning on the eight because it compares them with two other 'control' groups — eight non-London authorities, all Labour-controlled, many with similar problems; and a further group of eight London authorities, four Labour and four Tory. The last two groups perform relatively efficiently. The Audit Commission meets today (Thursday 8 Jan) to approve the report: it will meet a delegation from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss it, but will not tone it down.

Labour's front bench are the less reconciled to these authorities because they are so often the target of their leaders' attacks. Haringey's Bernie Grant and Lambeth's Linda Bellos are fierce in their criticism, while Margaret Hodge of Islington, who dissociates herself from the fiercest of it, has written in the latest issue of the Party's monthly journal *New Socialist* that the front bench members were 'fundamentally misguided' in their criticisms.

This rift, and the Audit Commission report, will cast a long shadow over the launch in Leeds early next month of a new campaign defending local democracy and attacking the government for starving it of funds and support. It will take some patching: on the one side are authorities determined to maintain spending on what they see as essential; on the other, a shadow cabinet determined not to be seen as profligate in the pre-election period. ●

Owen's open question

DR DAVID OWEN, the SDP leader, may leave the Alliance after the next election. He has announced this fact, not to the British public nor — as far as is known — to his own Alliance colleagues: but announced it he has — to the readers of the *New York Times*.

In an interview with the then *NYT* London Bureau Chief Joseph Lelyveld (now the paper's foreign editor), published on 30 November and not picked up by the British press, Dr Owen responded to a question from Lelyveld on 'What would happen if it (the Alliance) again failed to win enough seats to be a major factor in British politics?'.

In his response, wrote Lelyveld, Owen 'did not go out of his way to lay to rest frequently expressed doubts about his personal commitment to the movement he now heads with Mr (David) Steel. Instead, he predicted that the Social Democrats and the Liberals would then merge, a move he has so far resisted.'

Lelyveld then quotes Owen directly as saying: 'Whether I would be part of that merged body is a very open question . . . I'm not part of the soft centre of British politics. I'm not part of splitting the difference on every issue. I've got other things to do in my life.'

Owen has clearly staked out a principled, if individualist, position. But where will it lead him? Is crossing the floor to a third-term Tory party one of the 'other things' he would consider doing in his life? ●

Into the twilight zone

THE BROADSIDE launched against the Communist Party leadership by its ex industrial organiser Mick Costello in the *Morning Star* this week is likely to be the least of the party's problems in 1987. With membership now down to 9,000, the lowest since before the war, the leading members

are going to have to make key decisions over what sort of party it can and should be, and who should become the new General Secretary to lead it into either a new political era — or historical oblivion.

In resolving what role it can have, in an age when industry and membership of political parties both appear to be in continuous decline, the attacks from the *Morning Star* largely serve to confirm that the *Star*'s preferred political route is simply not an option.

For the last year, the political organisation supporting the *Morning Star* has been the Communist Campaign Group, made up of those who were expelled from the Communist Party or who chose to abandon it as beyond the left-wing pale — as well as by members of the Communist Party who support it more secretively. It operates from offices above the *Morning Star* but has no formal membership. However, secretary Ray Colvin claims it is supported by 'the majority of the party's activists' — an estimate gauged by votes at the meetings of the People's Printing Society which owns the *Morning Star*.

Mick Costello's two attacks on the CP this week do not mention the Communist Campaign Group. According to Ray Colvin, the Group exists to 'win back' the leadership of the Communist Party, not provide the nucleus of a new organisation. Hardline critics of the CP leadership have been divided over whether to split formally or whether to stay in and make a bid to regain control of the party. Unless the Campaign Group gets a sudden new influx of support this year, it is most improbable that they could avoid a humiliating defeat at the CP's next national congress in November 1987, following their failure at all the major district congresses last November.

One of the Campaign Group's problems is that they have no one of stature to lead a new organisation. Their best known sympathiser, Ken Gill, faces delicate negotiations for the amalgamation between his union TASS and the ASTMS and is not going to risk his union status by putting himself at the head of a tiny hard-left grouping still committed to the old nostrums of pro-Soviet communism. And that's their other problem. The Communist Campaign Group has attracted some politically serious people who are well aware of the fate small hardline parties — like the New Communist Party — in British politics and they do not wish to follow them into the Twilight Zone. What they hope to do, says Colvin, is stay operating on the edge of the CP building up support until they 'win' not the leadership, but the rank and file, leaving the current Communist Party leadership to run a rump organisation.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev is unlikely to formally back a new grouping, although the USSR is not so monolithic that other Soviet organisations might not support one. Lev Parshin, the Soviet official responsible for relations with other Communist Parties, says with appropriate diplomacy that relations with the British Communist Party are 'normal', and that the Soviet order for the *Morning Star* has gone neither up nor down in the last few years. He refuses to say whether or not the CPSU has had or would have any dealings with the Communist Campaign Group, but adds that the visit of Tony Chater, editor of the *Morning Star*, to the Soviet Union last year was under the auspices of *Pravda*, not the CPSU.

The test of the Communist Group's success will be on its own terms — the reclamation of industrial struggle as the vanguard of the political revolution. Here Mick Costello makes his harshest claims, stating that 'virtually every one of the party's important industrial advisories' is politically disaffected 'despite being hit brutally by repeated purges' and most of the party's leading industrial members have similarly been 'hit'.

According to the Communist Party's leaders,

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these claims are not true. The current industrial organiser, Pete Carter, who succeeded Mick Costello, says most of the industrial advisories are holding regular well attended meetings and have more life in them than they did when he inherited them.

According to Jack Ashton, secretary of the Scottish region, long the CP's strongest industrial base, they have expelled no leading industrial members. He accepts that the party's industrial base is much weaker, but argues that this is largely due to the massive closures and cut-backs in mining and heavy industry. Far from emerging from the miners' strike in a highly militant, political mood, the miners are now experiencing terrible hardship and demoralisation, says Ashton. A political alternative of victory through industrial struggle would not be terribly popular.

Costello's characterisation seems only to apply to the print members and the dispute at Wapping, and one crucial measure of the Campaign Group and *Morning Star*'s position will be how far they can extract a political or industrial victory out of the picketing of News International.

None of this solves the problems facing the Communist Party whose members are divided over whether they would like the Campaign Group supporters to get out and end the internal division, or whether they believe some reconciliation would be better. Nor does it settle the conflict over whether the Communist Party should choose to be a grouping of 'intellectuals', meaning people who plan and publicise political strategies, whether they are industrial workers or academics; or whether it should remain an activist organisation with roots in local and national campaigns. How far Martin Jacques, editor of *Marxism Today*, can pick up support to be the CP's next General Secretary will in part depend on whether the 'eurocommunists' can come up with a feasible and attractive role for the Communist Party — and whether the CP, with its long and chequered history, is in any position to freely 'choose' a role.

Sarah Benton

NEW STATESMAN SUBSCRIBERS

Over the next month the *NS* and Colchester Post Office will be co-operating in a detailed study of our subscriptions list to see what can be done from both sides to ensure the most efficient handling of subscribers' copies by the Post Office.

If any subscribers are still experiencing problems with erratic or late delivery of the magazine they should write to **Joanne Hurst** at the *NS* by **Friday 16 January** with full details so that all complaints can be passed on to the PO for investigation.

'Will you gas us?'

THE 1936 Public Order Act originally passed to curb Mosley's fascist Blackshirts is being used by Staffordshire police to press charges against three lesbians and nine gay men, age-range 17-25, who demonstrated against a local councillor's remark that to deal with Aids he'd 'gas 90 per cent of queers'.

Bill Brownhill, Conservative leader of South Staffordshire district council, made the remark on 16 December and has re-iterated it to local press and radio. It followed, by five days, Manchester chief constable James Anderton's 11 December comment that many with, or at risk of, Aids are in 'a human cesspit of their own making'. The *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*, for the right-wing press, both repudiated Brownhill in editorials, while approving of Anderton.

The twelve now facing trial at Seisdon magistrates court on 23-24 February (one, a woman, is charged additionally with assaulting a police officer) travelled by mini-bus to Brownhill's home in Wombourne, Staffs, on 21 December in a protest organised by Nottingham Lesbian & Gay Youth Organisation and Lesbian & Gay Youth Movement. They say: 'We asked a young man who answered the door, "Is Mr Brownhill in, please? We've come to be gassed".'

Police removed them from a 'sit-in' in Brownhill's garden. They were subsequently remanded in custody for seven days over Christmas and were handcuffed on both appearances in court before being bailed. Ivan Geffen, a Walsall solicitor in practice since 1942 who now represents two of them, describes the treatment they received as 'all part of the hysteria arising from Aids'.

Geffen has written to the Crown Prosecution Service at Stafford calling for an explanation of the way the court was, as he believes, misled at the young people's first appearance. The prosecution claimed that the identities and addresses of the defendants had not been established, which to his knowledge was not wholly true. A duty solicitor was acting until Geffen, and also Louise Christian of Fisher Christian & Co for the other 10 defendants, were retained.

Closure of the courts over the Christmas period had the effect of precipitating what amounts to a seven-day prison sentence — even though, since affray is not alleged, a custodial sentence on the breach of the peace charges if eventually proved would be unlikely.

Andrew Lumsden

A 'Wombourne 12' Defence Fund has been launched, c/o BM GYM, London WC1N 3XX.

South African omens

Johannesburg

As the season of peace and goodwill approaches, two chillingly juxtaposed omens give some indication of the desperate situation prevailing here in the White South. They also give us an idea of what the New Year will bring to this tortured country. Just a few days ago the brother of a friend shot himself accidentally while showing his handgun to his parents. He died, quite literally, in his father's arms.

Later that day, walking in Johannesburg, I noticed several heavily armed security guards outside a bank. Later, I passed a policeman lovingly nursing a pump-action shotgun while standing next to his car; even traffic police and wardens, including so-called 'meter maids', wear side-arms in the Johannesburg Central Business District these days. Back at my small flat, I witnessed my neighbour take a gun out of his car and tuck it into a holster before going shopping.

Close to the surface of my memory was a recent incident on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand, where a group consisting mainly of black students was protesting about the murder of a number of children in Soweto. Things were beginning to calm down when a student from the associated dental school tried to drive his Porsche out of the car park, forcing a way through the crowd, nearly injuring several people. The students' response was immediate and predictable; several stones were thrown at his car. His response was similarly predictable — he pulled out a gun and fired several shots at the crowd. The police, instead of dragging the illegal gunman off for discharging a firearm within city limits, themselves fired tear gas into the crowd, and moved in to beat up students. People are not only carrying firearms, they are prepared to use them. Second omen: last month saw the formal start of a Black Sash campaign (ignored, of course, by the South African Broadcasting Corporation) to 'Free the Children'. Minors, many under the age of 16 years, are currently in detention all over South Africa. The latest figure is estimated by the Black Sash to be at least 1,500, and may well be over 2,000. The campaign aimed to secure the release of all these children by Christmas.

'I am ashamed to be South African,' cried Sheena Duncan of Black Sash during her speech to inaugurate the campaign. She then read details of a case (monitored by the Detainee Parents' Support Committee) where a 13-year-old boy was arrested and viciously assaulted by the police. The beating was sufficient to hospitalise the child for eight days — his eyes needed stitching from the kicking he received — he was then detained for three months. Two parents of detained children stood before the meeting and, detailing their experiences, moved the audience to tears.

The campaign continued with a symbolic Christmas party — without children. Parents assembled, and lists of detained children from the Transvaal region were displayed — names, addresses and ages. The lists, although incomplete, included some 300. Parents searched almost hopefully for their children's names. The lists, beginning with 'Baardman, Nousa — no address, 17 yrs', included 'Jamekwane, Hendrick — 5382 Zone 5 Deipkloof 1864, 13 yrs; Mahlanqu, Sizani — 370 Lekaneng Section Tembisa 1628, 11 yrs' (there are several 11-year-olds on the list); 'Modibeoh, William — 3909 Kagiso 1744, 11 yrs' was one of three brothers.

The streets of Johannesburg were decorated with coloured lights as 'Christian' politicians of this country celebrated the birth of a special child. In the townships, the children of South Africa are abused, and grow up under the most savage oppression; the madness of the small arms race continues uncontrolled.

'Ratel'

The author is a prominent anti-apartheid activist.

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PETER KELLNER

Kinnock's problem: how to woo an ungrateful electorate

HOW UNFAIR life can be. Three years ago seven hurdles seemed to stand between Neil Kinnock and Downing Street. Labour had fought the previous election divided on defence; it needed to unite. The party appeared to oppose trade union democracy; its image had to be improved. Labour's opposition to membership of the Common Market had become a liability; the policy needed changing. The party machine was in poor shape; it had to be reorganised, starting at the top. MPs faced reselection; the blood-spilling needed to be minimised. Arthur Scargill was about to launch the miners' union on a destructive strike; he had to be cut down to size. Militant was beginning to give Labour a bad name in Liverpool; Derek Hatton and his friends needed to be expelled.

Today, each of those hurdles has been overcome. Labour is more united on defence than at any time for a generation. Trade union ballots are here to stay: Neil has given his word. Labour is no longer promising (or threatening) to withdraw Britain from the Common Market. The party machine has been reorganised by a new general secretary and a new director of communications. The process of reselection has been completed with surprisingly little aggravation. Arthur Scargill no longer matters. And Derek Hatton and his friends have been expelled.

As a bonus, this week's results of the first elections to Labour's National Constitutional Committee, which will take over from the NEC the job of carrying out any further expulsions that may be necessary, have produced a clear 7-4 majority for the centre-right against the left.

Anyone predicting all this at the beginning of 1984 would also surely have predicted that Labour's poll rating would be higher now than it was then. Labour's shadow cabinet, meeting this week in Bishop's Stortford, should be planning for government with the certainty of knowing that in a few months' time they will be required to put those plans into practice.

Not a bit of it. Labour's support in January 1984 was around 38 per cent. The latest poll, by MORI in last weekend's *Sunday Times*, gives it precisely the same figure. The Tories' lead on most opinion polls since early November may not be on the formal agenda at Bishop's Stortford; but if anyone makes out that the polls haven't been discussed over drinks, they're lying.

KINNOCK could be forgiven if he feels a certain lack of gratitude from the voters. What more do they want him to do, for goodness sake — take a razor to Hatton's suits, or punch Scargill personally in the face? Short of walking on water, Kinnock has performed all the miracles that his supporters could have wished for. To no avail. Labour's rating remains stuck tantalisingly below the level that would guarantee the party power at the next election.

Two groups of people have sought to draw comfort from this state of affairs. Kinnock's critics say the figures are awful — they show that bashing the left doesn't win votes. Some of Kinnock's closest friends say the figures are fine — they argue that it doesn't matter if Labour hovers around 38 per cent: the party is bound to pick up extra support during the campaign, and this will guarantee victory.

I believe that both views are wrong. The critics' argument can be fleshed out roughly as follows. Voters like party leaders who show determination, lead from the front and demonstrate crusading zeal. Look at Mrs Thatcher: we may hate her policies, but she has won votes by sticking to her principles. Kinnock, on the other hand, has been hedging and trimming. He is paying the price. Only if he espouses full-blooded socialism can he hope to sweep the country.

There are two fallacies in that argument. First, Mrs Thatcher has lost more support than she has won by sticking to her principles. In 1981 she was the most unpopular Prime Minister on record; it took the Falklands war to rescue her. The Tories still won fewer votes in 1983 than in 1979. Since then the loss has continued. Every poll since September 1983 has shown the Tories to have lost votes since the last election. Furthermore, Mrs Thatcher's personal rating has suffered more than her party's. Between mid-1982 and late 1985 most polls showed that more people were satisfied with her performance as Prime Minister than said they would vote Tory. In most polls during 1986 she lagged behind the party.

> ***'Kinnock could be forgiven if he feels a certain lack of gratitude from voters. What more do they want him to do, for goodness sake?'***

The second fallacy is that Kinnock would storm to victory if he moved further to the left. Two things visibly shifted Labour's rating last year. When Kinnock fought Militant, Labour's support increased. When he decided to concentrate public attention on Labour's defence policy, support fell. Further evidence of the electoral unpopularity of Labour's left was provided in last May's local elections. The party did noticeably worse in places like Liverpool and Haringey than in the country as a whole.

Besides, there is something inherently implausible about the notion that more left-wing policies would increase support for Labour. It supposes that some people are willing to vote Alliance or Conservative because Labour isn't radical enough. Not only is the idea absurd (or, as academics might say, counter-intuitive); there is not a scrap of evidence to support it.

There *is* evidence that some younger voters are alienated from politics as a whole, and that Labour often seems remote from their concerns. But it does not logically follow that they will digest raw socialism more easily than they will swallow braised capitalism.

IF KINNOCK's critics are wrong, those of his friends who predict Labour gains during the next election campaign are displaying remarkable optimism. This is the record of the last seven general elections, comparing Gallup's figures one month before each election with Labour's share of the vote on polling day:

	Labour's support		
	one month before	on polling day	Change during campaign
	%	%	
1964	47	45	−2
1966	50	49	−1
1970	49	44	−5
1974-Feb	38	38	0
1974-Oct	40	40	0
1979	40	38	−2
1983	33	28	−5

As the chart shows, Labour has *never* gained support during any recent general election campaign. Labour needs to lift its support before the campaign starts.

So what is holding Labour back? Its defence policy helps to explain its recent wobbly poll figures. But I believe this is just part of a wider problem. After almost eight years in opposition, Labour is not seen as a credible alternative government. The shadow cabinet has been criticised for decamping to Bishop's Stortford this week to discuss not how to win the next election, but what a victorious Labour government will do afterwards. This criticism is misplaced. Labour's biggest campaigning task is to persuade voters that it can form an effective government. If Bishop's Stortford helps to add to the party's credibility on this, it will have done far more good than narrow tactical discussions ever could.

PS: Latest intelligence, or lack of it, on election timing. Last weekend's *Sunday Times* reported MORI's latest poll, showing a one-point Tory lead. 'Poll cools election hot-heads' ran the front page headline. The poll, wrote political correspondent David Hughes, 'is certain to dampen recent intense speculation that Mrs Thatcher may decide to go for an early summer election'.

Who gave this speculation a giant shove in the first place? Step forward, David Hughes. His page one *ST* story on 9 November appeared under the headline, 'Poll lead hots up Tory election fever'. MORI's poll, he wrote, 'will intensify the feeling among Tory MPs that the odds are swinging in favour of an election being called in May or June'. What did MORI find? A one-point Tory lead.

Outsiders have often marvelled at the predictive skills of Sunday lobby journalists. But to report identical pieces of information less than two months apart and to predict diametrically opposed consequences — ah, there's lobby journalism of special refinement. □

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The green sheep in 'Colonel Gadaffi Drive'

'Loony Left' councils have been identified by the government as Labour's Achilles heel. Are they? Or are they Fleet Street's shame?* JOLYON JENKINS *reports

DID YOU know that:

- Islington has banned heterosexuals from using all libraries and bus stops, and that a pig has been elected to the council as part of an animal rights drive?
- Sheffield has been renamed Little Malvinas, and £225,000 has been spent on nuclear free superloos?
- Haringey has appointed 20 Zulu tribesmen to supervise the comedians at the borough's working men's clubs, the High Street has been renamed Colonel Gadaffi Drive, and Syrian terrorists have been supplied with contraceptives as part of a Third World anti-Aids drive?

No, they're not true. The *Sun* cited all these examples of the Loony Left at work in its 17 November issue, as part of a spoof 'Loonyopoly' game. It did at least admit, on this occasion, that 'sometimes we've exaggerated for a laugh' but claimed that they were all 'based on the daft decisions that really have been taken in these topsy-turvy Labour-controlled boroughs . . . if these potty policies haven't happened yet, you can bet your bottom dollar they soon will!'

1986 was the year when Loony Leftism climaxed: when the *Sun* announced that it was going to award a prize — a symbolic two-finger statuette — at the end of the year to the looniest council of them all (it went to Brent — not very surprising, considering that a month previously a sub-editor had labelled it 'Britain's Barmiest Borough'); when the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday* sent teams of reporters chasing round London boroughs in search of good (if not true) stories; when even *The Times* used the term without apparent irony. More importantly, it was the year when Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley and Conservative Party Chairman Norman Tebbit decided this could be harnessed as a vote winner for the Tory Party.

The two campaigns, tabloid and Tory, are distinct, but the latter depends on the former. When Tebbit issued a list of 143 examples of 'the crazy campaigns of Left-wing Councils' to party workers and candidates, all the examples were taken directly from press cuttings with no attempt to check whether they were true, though it has avoided some of the more factually suspect stories. It works both ways. The *Sunday Times* mistakenly said that Sheffield had an annual peace budget of £250,000. When challenged, (says Roy Hattersley in *Punch*), they cited a Commons statement by Nicholas Ridley. Nicholas Ridley, it turned out, had been quoting . . . the *Sunday Times*. More subliminally, the outlandish stories of pure irrationality which the tabloids tell provide a wave of hysteria which the party rides on, without having to be responsible for it.

That deniability is important, because many of the tabloid stories are plain false. The day before the *Sun* announced the winner of its loony prize, it ran a 'year of the loonies' summary.

Some of the stories were so good that the *Sun* clearly felt they deserved to be true, even when they had been conclusively disproved months before. For example: 'Black dustbin liners are banned by Haringey Council, because they are "racially offensive". From now on council staff and tenants will be issued with grey dustbin liners.'

This one started in the *Mail on Sunday* on 2 March. The *MoS* said perfectly unambiguously that the binliners 'have been banned' by the council. The evidence was that anonymous staff in the parks department were alleged to have been told by an anonymous storeman at Haringey's central depot that they couldn't have their black bin liners because the word 'black' was racially offensive. The paper hedged its bets by including the sentence: 'Councillors said there was no written ban on the use of black sacks — but said the council had a strong anti-racist policy'. The next Sunday the *MoS* came as close as it could to a retraction: 'Black dustbin liners at the centre of a council race storm are not to be banned after all.'

Bernie Grant complained to the NUJ Ethics Council. Its investigations concluded that 'there is no minute in existence of any meeting of any committee of Haringey Council which indicates that any decision was taken by the council to stop using black bin-liners.'

> ***'1986 was the year when Loony Leftism climaxed: when the Sun announced that it was going to award a prize — a symbolic two-finger statuette — to the looniest council of them all'***

Another warmed-up story the *Sun* ran was that 'Barmy Bernie Grant' had 'set aside £½ million for superloos for gypsies.' That one first appeared on 4 November. (The phrase used then was 'roving Irish tinkers.') If true it would have meant that each of the 24 super-loos would have cost £21,000. The reality was that a total of £395,000 was being spent on eight travellers' sites on *all* facilities and officer support, in line with the council's legal obligations.

On 15 October the *Mirror* reported that 'A council (Haringey again) has banned references to family life during sex lessons in its schools. Teachers have been ordered to drop the word 'family' because it 'discriminates' against homosexuals . . . The council . . . is also sending questionnaires to staff to check that they are teaching sex the way they have been told.' Two months later the *Mirror* grovelled: 'We now accept that there has been no such ban and no questionnaire checking that staff have been teaching sex the way they have been told as we reported.'

But perhaps the most alarming loony Haringey story was in the *Daily Mail* on 9 October: 'Baa Baa Black sheep . . . has been banned by a Left-wing council as 'racist'. Playgroup leaders have been told that in future children should sing 'green' sheep instead . . . the ban (was) ordered during a racism awareness course run by Bernie Grant's Haringey Council. One playgroup leader said: "we were told on the course that it's wrong to sing the rhyme because it's derogatory towards black people. It was suggested that 'green' sheep could be substituted".'

Haringey denied the story from the start, and issued a libel writ against the *Mail*. (The *Birmingham Evening Mail*, which also carried the story, printed a retraction.) Since then, several *Mail* reporters have phoned up or doorstepped about 20 playgroup workers in an attempt to stand its story up. As far as they can tell, none of them could confirm it. In one case (Mrs O'Brien at Crouch End) the reporter claimed that he wanted to place a child in a playgroup which did not practice racism, and then steered the conversation round to the racism awareness training courses. Another playgroup worker (Mrs Whitehead at Springfield) was doorstepped by a *Mail* reporter. She later received phone calls from people claiming to be from Marks and Spencer or Tesco, wanting to put on training courses for their staff on racism. Whether the story was true or not (and evidence is, to put it kindly, thin), it hardly seems worth harassing so many people.

AN UNREASONABLE proportion of local government resources is now being spent trying to get corrections, retractions or apologies from newspapers who often have no intention of being fair in their reporting. One problem is that there is sometimes a grain of truth in the stories. For example, another of the *Sun*'s claims. Camden council, it says, 'wants to build its own £55 million coal-fired station somewhere near Kings Cross because the Central Electricity Generating Board uses nuclear power. They are already refusing to pay 17 per cent of the council's electricity bill.' The truth is that both ideas have been discussed at Labour group meetings, but have received little support. Neither is remotely close to being implemented.

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RHYME WITHOUT REASON... NOW LOONY LEFT REWRITES CHILDREN'S NURSERY FAVOURITE
Baa, baa, green (YES, GREEN) sheep
BAA, BAA black sheep— one of the oldest children's nursery rhymes — has been banned by a
By ANTHONY DORAN
Home Affairs Correspondent
They claimed yesterday that they were told their groups would lose their council grants if they did not attend.
it's derogatory towards black people. It was suggested that 'green' sheep could be substituted. But nobody explained why.
course and now they Monday.'
The news was greeted wi ment and alarm by Minist Tory conference in Bourn
Education Secretary Baker said: 'This is anoth the wall of bigotry that council is building.
'What next—a ban on I ing of a White Christmas
The nursery rhyme h have been written after tax was imposed on woo The words have hardl since.
ROLL UP FOR THE SUN'S BARMY BOARD GA
WIDOW TWANKY IS BLACK FOR LEFTY SHOW
By DENIS BUDGE
A LOONY Left-wing council's Christmas panto will have a BLACK Widow Twanky.
Labour-controlled Camden Council in North London say the show must have no "anti-racist or anti-sexist" jokes.
The ruling also means a WOMAN will play the genie of the lamp—and Aladdin will be played by a black actor.
Aladdin is seen giving all his money away. And the panto's traditional ending has been changed too. Wishee Washee gets to marry the princess—NOT the hero.
Scriptwriter Terry Duggan said: "A pantomime should reflect the community it is part of."
Ian Bowater, director of the Shaw Theatre where the censored Aladdin is being staged, said: "Through the years, racist and sexist jokes had crept into the panto.
"We are simply making sure there are none of those in our production.
Wealth
"Aladdin gives his money to the people to show the kids that wealth isn't everything.
"Wishy Washee gets the girl and the moral is that girls don't always fall for a hero."
LEFT-wing councils' anti-racism campaigns are turning into witch-hunts that are damaging race relations, Home Secretary Douglas Hurd warned yesterday.
And he attacked Labour leader Neil Kinnock for giving "rash pledges" to sweep away Britain's existing immigration controls.
The Sun Says—Page Six
Hurd . . . witch-hunts
The racist bin liner is blacked
By CHESTER STERN
BLACK dustbin liners have been banned at Bernie Grant's Left-wing Haringey Council
they are 'ra-
storeman at the North London council's central depot refused to supply them. He said: 'I'm sorry, the order is unacceptable. The order contains the word "black" which is racially offensive.'
Councillors said there was no written ban on the use of black sacks — but said the council had a strong anti-racist policy.
The council has now changed over to grey sacks — to avoid offending West Indian workers in the cleaning department.
The row follows the sacking of a Haringey Council woman employee for using a banana-shaped pen which upset an Asian colleague.
GO
LIVERPOOL
ISLINGTON
STUPIDITY CHEST
CHANCE
SHEFFIELD
LAMBETH
OXFORD
HARINGEY
GOTO JAIL
FREE PARKING
LOONYOPOLY
RULES
ALL you need to play is a dice—and a great sense of humour. There is no limit on the number of players.
Use coins as counters and start on the square marked GO. Throw the dice and obey the instructions of each silly square you land on.
Although sometimes we're aggravated for a laugh, every square is based on the daft decisions that really have been taken in these topsy-turvy Labour-controlled boroughs!
Remember Islington's gay text book, Jenny Lives With Eric And Martin? Or Barmy Bernie Grant's unbelievable smacks on the police after the Tottenham riot?
So if these potty policies haven't happened yet, you can bet your bottom dollar they soon will!
If you are the first person to land on Stupidity Chest or Chance, follow the instructions printed next to the Chance or Stupidity Chest section in the centre of the board.
The next person to land there follows the next instruction.
Play continues until one contestant completes a full tour of the Loonyopoly board.
Then, just like real-life in the loony boroughs that have banned competitive sports, every player is declared a winner!
? CHANCE
STUPIDITY CHEST
Roll up for the New Statesman's great new game! Play 'Spot the Truth'!

So, it wasn't very surprising that there was a certain amount of dismay from council leaderships, weary at all the disinformation, at the response of Labour's front bench to Nicholas Ridley's Commons onslaught on 17 November. John Cunningham was naturally caught by surprise, and so wasn't able to point to some inaccuracies in Ridley's speech. For example, Ridley claimed: 'we hear that Southwark Council is pointing the way ahead. It wants to employ another 6,000 people, as we move from a nation of shopkeepers to a nation of race and sex snoopers.' Not quite. Southwark has put forward plans to employ an extra 4,355 people over two years, which would generate a further 1,388 jobs outside the council. It calculates that the package would save the taxpayer £51m. None of the jobs are for race or sex snoopers. The plans can't be implemented unless the government changes the law, which it won't.

Instead, Cunningham said that Ridley was 'talking about fewer than 0.1 of 1 per cent' of all Labour Councillors. That works out as nine Labour councillors who Cunningham seemed to accept were genuinely loony. But he didn't say *which*. (More than nine councillors certainly assumed that he was referring to them.)

That allowed the Tories to say that Cunningham was underestimating the numbers, and made room for Tebbit's list of 143 brands of metropolitan lunacy. The councils he named were: Manchester, Bristol, Haringey, Ealing, Southwark, Brent, Islington, Camden, Lambeth, Hackney, Newham, Sheffield, Derbyshire and Edinburgh. That more or less coincides with the tabloid list, though that also would have to contain at least the following: Oxford (where left-wingers, it is alleged, want to ban Enid Blyton from school libraries), Hounslow (for allegedly wanting to give parenting leave to lesbians), Birmingham (for allegedly telling teachers not to advise parents how to get their children onto assisted places schemes), and Wolverhampton (for allegedly wanting all primary school children to be taught Punjabi).

Tebbit's campaign is rather more truthful than the tabloids', to judge by an analysis of his examples from one council, Camden. Here are his claims in full, and the truth about them:

- The council is spending £33,000 in 1986-7 to celebrate the 'International Year of Peace'. Projects include £1,500 for a peace mural, £500 for an under-fives festival and £1,150 for floral displays in parks, including a CND symbol.

This is the *United Nations* Year of Peace we're talking about. Britain voted in favour of it at the UN. However, no money for it has been provided from central government — unlike 1985, 'Youth Year,' and 1987, 'Year of Sheltered Housing'. The money Camden is spending has come from existing budgets: under-fives festivals and floral displays in the parks are normal items of council expenditure. ▷

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● The Council is setting up a £100,000 Lesbian and 'Gay' Unit, with four workers at a salary of £15,000 a year each. Applicants are expected to have 'personal knowledge of discrimination as experienced by lesbians and gay men'.

This is true.

● A 'Lesbian Day' is being organised by the Council on 6 December 1986. It will cost £2,000. Earlier in 1986, the Camden Women's Committee approved a £15,000 grant to a group planning to establish a Camden Lesbian Centre.

Almost true. The Lesbian Day cost £1,800. The council intends to establish a Lesbian committee, and the day was part of its normal consultation period with interested groups. Some 300 people attended. Otherwise, true.

● The council is staging an 'anti-racist' and 'anti-sexist' version of the pantomime Aladdin, with Aladdin and Widow Twankey being played by blacks. In this production Aladdin selflessly donates his newly acquired fortune to the city of Peking.

Difficult to know what to make of this one. Since when were *pantomimes* required to stick to the plot? (Or would Tebbit rather that Widow Twankey's laundry were forced out of business by the high socialist rates, only to be reprieved by rate-capping fairy godmother Nicholas Ridley?) And Tebbit is surely making at least a tactical mistake in implying that there's anything wrong with having black actors. The actors in question are in fact highly experienced in television, and were chosen on grounds of merit, not colour. Moreover, it's not the council which is staging the pantomime, but the Shaw Theatre — which is owned by Camden but operationally independent of it. The council press office say they're jolly pleased that the show is anti-racist and anti-sexist, that it's playing to excellent audiences and that it's ideal family entertainment which steers clear of risqué and offensive jokes.

● Sinn Fein Councillors addressed a meeting of Camden Council on 22 October amidst considerable uproar.

True.

● The Council's Housing Director has reported to councillors that local tenants' associations are dominated by white middle-aged tenants, 'effectively excluding anyone who may be black, younger, new to the area, gay, lesbian or disabled'. New rules are to be drawn up, including a recommendation that all tenants' associations should have ethnic minority representatives on their committees.

True.

● The £19,000 a year principal policy adviser to the Council leader is ex-GLC Deputy Leader John McDonnell, a joint editor of the hard left newspaper, *Labour Herald*.

True.

● The District Auditor, Mr Brian Skinner, is calling for 'urgent action' to reduce the £7 million rent arrears of Camden tenants. More than 1,000 owe sums between £1,000 and £3,000 and 105 owe more than £3,000.

True. But Mr Skinner recognised the difficulties that Camden faced in collecting rent arrears, and that it was taking action on a new rent accounting system. The council collects more than 95 per cent of rent money owing to it.

The Council has taken out a huge £100 million deferred purchase loan — so burdening ratepayers with large interest repayments in future years.

True. But why did it need to?

What are we to make of all this? The difficulty is not so much that Tebbit and Ridley get things wrong as that we lack a universally accepted definition of municipal sanity.

Sins of the right

For just about every example of loony leftiness cited, it's possible to find an exact counterpart in the actions of central government or Tory controlled councils. So: Camden employs John McDonnell as a policy adviser. Who does the Department of Education employ as Kenneth Baker's special adviser? None other than former Camden Tory Councillor Tony Kerpel, a founder member of the hard right Coalition for Peace through Security. Lambeth adorns its lamp-posts with signs telling motorists that it is 'nuclear free'. Neighbouring Tory Wandsworth tells them that they are entering 'the brighter borough'. Edinburgh gave £195 to the Lesbian and Gay Pride Group for a two-week festival of events. The Office of Arts and Libraries, through the Arts Council, subsidises the predilictions of a much smaller proportion of the population with its £13 million a year grant to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Lambeth employs a 'peace and nuclear affairs officer' at a cost of £14,000 a year. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office makes a direct grant of £50,500 to NATO's British Atlantic Committee, a pressure group which promotes the doctrine of nuclear deterrence.

And which really is the madder: councils that give grants to lesbian and gay groups, or South Stafford Tory councillor Bill Brownhill, who says that he would gas '90 per cent of queers'? There's even a counterpart to Ridley's obscure remark that citizens of Labour boroughs lived in fear of 'the knock in the door in the middle of the night'. After a meeting of Haringey council travellers' committee in October (very unruly, according to Labour members present), at least two Labour councillors' homes were unexpectedly visited by a group of Tory members.

THAT POINT made, what are we left with? First, a fair amount of 'gesturism', which does little good, less harm, and which gets up the noses — as it's intended to — of the establishment. In this category one would include Lambeth council's decision to name a road after Greenham Common, or Newham's decision to fly the ANC and SWAPO flags from East Ham and West Ham town halls. To a lesser extent — because they may do some good -- the whole Nuclear-free Zone movement.

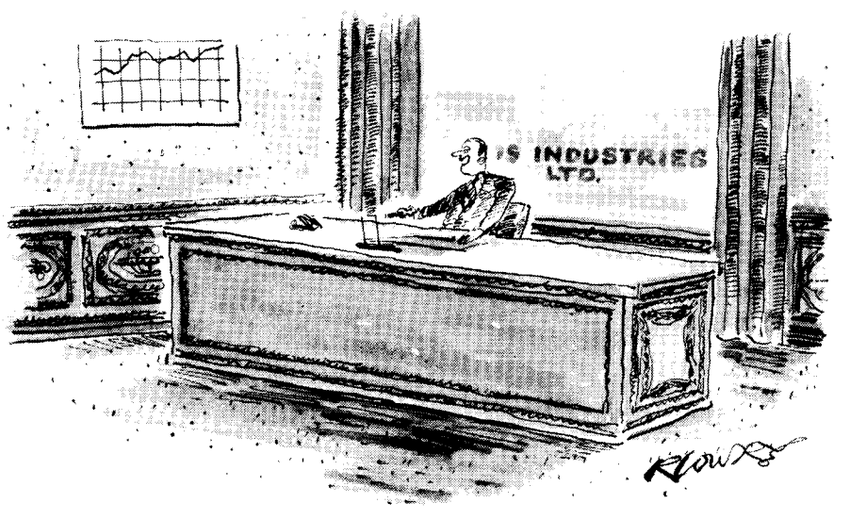
Second, some zealotry, as Neil Kinnock correctly pointed out. Brent is the obvious example, where laudable aims were pursued in a confrontational way.

Third, a decision to positively promote the interests of sections of the community — blacks, gays, women — which have previously had their interests ignored. The Tories may disapprove of it, but the juggling of interests is what politics is all about; their disapproval amounts only to the fact that local councils engage in politics. It's only when council leaderships see their powerbase solely in terms of discrete communities of interest, and not in terms of a broadly unified population, that the criticism has any bite.

The real lunacy, I'd suggest, comes from Nicholas Ridley, when, looking back to a golden age in the town halls, he quotes approvingly Professor Norman Stone:

> Local government was the sort of activity that Englishmen did best. It was humdrum, small scale. It involved Committees dealing with practical problems in a practical way, it deserved the crack that the genius of England was for making drains. It was representative, 'democratic' if you prefer — but it was cheap — reasonably humane and reasonably efficient.

Ah, those halcyon days — of John Poulson and T. Dan Smith; of planning deals stitched up humanely and democratically on the golf courses, and building contracts humanely awarded in Masonic meetings. We knew whose interests were being served then. □



'All you need is love! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha . . .'

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Making industry more attractive is all a question of pull.

Industry Year 1986 began against decades of negative industrial attitudes.

"Britain is a curious paradox of an industrialised country with an anti-industrial culture," summed up Alistair Burt, MP, in a parliamentary debate on 26th November.

Yet he also had some cheering news about the success of Industry Year in his region, the north-west.

With the major thrust of Industry Year to strengthen links between industry and education, 270 secondary schools (50 per cent of the north-west total) are now linked with local companies. It is double the figure for 1985.

All over the UK similar effort has been made, with companies galvanised into action to change attitudes. Among them, Esso.

We've made and distributed, for instance, technology films and videos for schools – and issued 7,000 secondary schools with a series of wall charts for the DTI-backed Physics Plus project.

We continually visit schools ourselves, encouraging return visits to our plants and terminals.

We have also helped teachers to gain industrial experience through the Understanding British Industry Secondment Programme – and we are in the forefront of sixth-form Work Shadowing, with over 50 Esso executives participating.

British companies have combined in a remarkable national campaign this year.

We hope it is the start of making British industry magnetic once again.

INDUSTRY *Matters*

Esso

Quality at work for Britain.

A MEMBER OF THE EXXON GROUP

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John Pilger right and wrong

Last week star journalist John Pilger explained in these pages why he resigned as editor-in-chief of the* News on Sunday, *the new left-wing tabloid. Now* News on Sunday *has the right to reply to his criticisms

THIS SPRING *News on Sunday*, the first radical national paper to be launched in this country for generations, will hit the streets. It will be a welcome breath of fresh air for millions of people who are sick of the diet of trivia currently served up by the daily and Sunday tabloids.

It is nearly three years since the notion of *News on Sunday* was first conceived by Alan Hayling, Chris Walsh and Ben Lowe, and in all that time the basic idea behind *News on Sunday* has hardly changed.

Our intention is clear. The paper John Pilger so eloquently argued for in the *New Statesman* last week is almost exactly what we intend to produce. *News on Sunday* will not be a 'radical *Sun*', 'an old style *Daily Mirror*', or an imitation of anything else. It will be itself.

That means it will be a campaigning, investigative paper, speaking for and fighting on behalf of its readers.

John Pilger is absolutely right — national tabloids today 'dress up the lurid to look like news'. But you can be certain *News on Sunday* will have none of this. Instead, the paper will proceed on the basis that people want to know what really goes on behind the scenes in the government, the City, company boardrooms and wherever decisions are taken or deals struck which affect ordinary people.

It will be a paper to be believed, and readers will be able to count on it to treat issues seriously, even-handedly, and in depth. Most of all, *News on Sunday* will care.

INSTEAD of the fake concerns of Fleet Street, *News on Sunday* will confront the real issues: the bad housing, the dilapidated schools, the embattled health services and decimated public transport that ordinary people have to struggle with each day. We will seek to explain why these problems have occurred — and we will do so through 'human interest' journalism that, in the better tabloid traditions, treats human beings seriously and with the dignity they deserve.

We also recognise that on a Sunday people want more than news. They want to be entertained. But we believe sexual titillation and a surfeit of soap and royal stories do not amount to recreational reading of any substance.

News on Sunday's entertainment will be second to none. We are attracting some excellent writers who recognise that there is a wealth of creative talent abounding in all sections of our society.

So *News on Sunday* will be a popular Sunday tabloid of the non-sectarian left. It will be read with pleasure and interest by over 3 million ordinary working people, and this will ensure the commercial success of the venture.

These editorial intentions have, however, met with dismay in certain circles of people who would prefer to see a more intellectual paper aimed at those who are already convinced of the merits of socialism.

We hope such people will enjoy our paper as a popular counterbalance to the rest of the press, but we will not deflect from the task of producing a popular tabloid paper, nor can we afford to.

News on Sunday will not preach, never mind preach to the converted.

To summarise, we can unequivocally refute John Pilger's charge that *News on Sunday* is drifting away from its original editorial intentions.

JOHN PILGER'S second charge is that *News on Sunday*'s structures make it impossible to run a newspaper. He claims committees are ruling *News on Sunday*. This is not the case. *News on Sunday*,

MORE ON SUNDAY
DUMMY ISSUE. DECEMBER 1986
THIS VIOLENT SOCIETY: WHO ARE THE REAL
NEWS ON SUNDAY
THE PEOPLE'S PAPER FOR WALES
W1 W2
DECEMBER 7, 1986 36p
Amazing question asked by MI5:
WRIGHT: Will he tell all?
WAS THE PRIME MINISTER A SPY?
By RICHARD HALL in Sydney and LEWIS CHESTER in London
BRITAIN'S secret service suspected Harold Wilson of spying for the Russians . . . and ordered a team of 30 agents to investigate the Labour prime minister.
Larger
Moscow trips led to hunt for Moles
MOSCOW, 1966: Wilson meets Kosygin (left) and other top Soviet officials. Tripe like this fed the fantasies of some of MI5's top spy-catchers
KINNOCK PUSHES FOR NEW MINE
Boost
Suspicion
Coded

Well, this is it: 36p's worth of, er, 'clarifying our minds' . . . plus the colour section *More on Sunday*

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like the *Guardian*, has a trust — in our case the Founders Trust — as a means of protecting the editorial independence of the paper. Like the *Guardian*, and any other company, *News on Sunday* is run by a board.

When the Founders Trust came to consider the issue in late December, they took the view that editing by committee or partnership was not on, and that the editor should have full power.

Accordingly, they reduced the power of the editor-in-chief to a purely advisory role. John Pilger was not prepared to accept this reduction in power, which is why he resigned.

There is no disguising that this was a difficult decision to take, and it caused considerable debate within the company. But, once the decision was made, the board and the staff of the paper gave it their unanimous support.

It can be seen that on this as on other issues, our 'committee structure' arrived at a clear, unequivocal decision that was then put into effect. The structures worked exactly as they were intended to.

We are grateful for all that John Pilger has put into the project. Now he has chosen to leave, we shall produce a great new radical popular paper without him, but with many of his ideas.

Watch out in the spring for a Sunday paper with a difference: a paper with news, wit, commitment and insight, a paper that will bite back on behalf of its readers and the country at large. □

Story of a power struggle

JOHN RENTOUL ***describes the background to the crisis***

'WE HAVE a major malfunction,' as the NASA official said of the launch of the US space shuttle *Challenger* last year, although in the case of the countdown to *News on Sunday*'s lift-off 'major' doesn't necessarily mean 'terminal'.

The board of *News on Sunday* moved quickly after John Pilger's departure to reassure investors and supporters. Chief executive Alan Hayling has been made temporary Editorial Director to work with editor Keith Sutton until the launch, now planned for April. And Gerry Taylor, respected ex-managing director of the *Guardian*, has been hauled in from his advisory role to take over as temporary chief executive.

The friction at *News on Sunday* was not just a personality clash between Pilger — who takes himself very seriously — and Sutton — who is disarmingly unpompous. That clash took place in the context of a wider struggle over who 'owns' the paper. Alan Hayling, one of the three people who first dreamt of the *News on Sunday* in 1983, is now in more direct control of the editorial shape of the paper.

The team behind the *News on Sunday* must have thought things were finally coming right last August when they raised £10 million from unions and local council pension funds only hours before their deadline. But then in November, just as they started recruiting staff, the project was paralysed by disagreement over what kind of paper it would be. Potential recruits were being offered two different models of the paper they were to work on: Sutton's 'left-wing *Sun*' and Pilger's '1960s *Mirror*'.

The split between the two came into the open at the board meeting on 16 December, with Sutton presenting his dummy (opposite) and Pilger presenting a counter-dummy. Pilger was forced to say that he thought that the choice of Sutton as editor had been a mistake, even though he was one of the people who had appointed him.

But the Founders Trust, set up to safeguard the character and independence of the paper, has the negative power of veto over the appointment or removal of the editor. Its three directors on the 13-person board made it clear that they would use their veto to block any move to sack Sutton.

No one liked Sutton's dummy, and even Sutton agrees it was a mistake to have presented it. 'It was put together by four people in a hurry, to clarify our minds over questions of allocating space,' he says. But Pilger failed to convince them that he had anything concrete to offer as an alternative. His blaming 'committees' and 'cabals' of 'non-journalists' for hijacking the paper rings hollow against his statement that the Founders Trust structure 'is probably the fairest that is possible in the present newspaper market' (*UK Press Gazette*, 25 August).

THERE IS certainly some manoeuvring for power going on, as one would expect in a relatively open and democratic venture. Outsiders are most easily struck by arguments about the *Sun*'s journalistic tricks and by the 'hardness' of the 12-point Charter, which appears to bear the scars of left-wing sectionalism. But editor Keith Sutton says nothing about the *Sun* that wasn't said by an early *News on Sunday* working party in September 1985: 'We have to fight on the same ground as the tabloids, using tabloid techniques to different ends.'

And the battles over the Charter were won, lost and transcended in the summer of last year, when the final version was drawn up (and kept pretty quiet). Comparing the final version with a draft of the Charter drawn up in June 1985, it can be seen that a barrage of specific policy positions have been added.

- Clause 6 commits the paper to 'support workers and their trade unions when they take industrial action' (unless it conflicts with other Charter principles).
- Clause 8 supports British withdrawal from Ireland as a precondition of any resolution of the conflict (but almost word for word repeating a *Mirror* leading article of 19 November 1985).
- Clause 11 'opposes the imposition of suffering on animals in pursuit of profit or pleasure'.
- Clause 12 supports unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from NATO.

However, Sutton appears to have enough imagination to interpret the Charter in practice in a popular way; and company chairperson Nick Horsley (boss of Northern Foods) says breezily that he only believes '85 per cent of it'.

Whoever supported whom, when, and for what motives, the truth of last month's power struggle is that Keith Sutton soaked up a lot of criticism and survived. The struggle is now between him and the 800,000 potential buyers that *News on Sunday* needs to break even. As Nick Horsley says, he has 'one chance to get it right'. □

POVERTY in BRITAIN

ONE THIRD OF THE BRITISH POPULATION NOW LIVES IN OR CLOSE TO POVERTY. AND IT'S GETTING WORSE.

Of course everyone's **against** poverty so here's a list of things we can all do. Please tick your choice:

☐ Express polite concern, turn our backs and hope it will all go away
☐ Leave it to the Government
☐ Put some loose change in a collecting tin and feel better
☐ Hang on for the Revolution — or the Millennium
☐ Buy something expensive and rely on the trickle-down effect of supply-side economics
☐ Order the poor to stop eating chips and leap on their bikes
☐ Join the Child Poverty Action Group

CPAG **fights** poverty — not by PR gestures but by sheer grinding hard work.

We campaign, dig out the facts, help the helpers, harry the powers-that-be.

Glamorous? No. Vital? Yes.

NOW MORE THAN EVER WE NEED YOUR HELP. PLEASE JOIN US: BECOME A SUPPORTING MEMBER.

For your £7 you get our campaigning magazine, Poverty — the facts, the figures, the people, the events. And we get the funds to fight for a fairer future.

CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

☐ I would like to join CPAG as a supporting member

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Town _____

Postcode _____

I enclose £7.00 *(cheques/POs payable to CPAG)*

☐ Please send details of CPAG's publications/ other membership schemes *(delete as appropriate)*

Please return to Child Poverty Action Group, FREEPOST, London EC1B 1QD (no stamp needed).

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Not one national paper backs Labour

Even his old paper, the* Mirror, *is reluctant.* GEOFFREY GOODMAN *surveys the forces ranged against Neil Kinnock

THE QUESTION must now be put: can Labour win the next General Election *despite* the media? And by 'media' I mean, most of all, the daily prints which still command a national readership per head of the population only slightly behind that of Sweden.

Of course Neil Kinnock must try to convince himself that the answer to this critical question is: 'Yes, to be sure, we can — remember 1945?'.

Indeed I do remember 1945. I was in uniform and it was my first vote. It was when the armed forces majority outvoted the minority of a pre-war generation that was still committed to the decayed wisdom of the old order. Nineteen forty-five happened despite the press; despite all the scare stories from broadsheets, that have since become tabloids, about 'Gestapo' Attlee's plans; it happened despite Churchill and it could happen again. But it will be more difficult this time.

In 1945 'the Labour' — which was a kind of warm, friendly label given to bracketing together most radical, progressive, leftish views — had the firm support of the *Daily Herald* (which then carried a staff that included many top-rank journalists); the *Daily Mirror* (whose Philip Zec produced the most memorable war-time cartoons and the remarkable election day masterpiece 'Vote for Him . . .' — a caption of a soldier holding a symbolic torch lighting the way forward); the Sunday *Reynolds News* (later to become the *Sunday Citizen* before it died) as well as the supreme example of radical journalism of that period, the liberal (with a small 'l') *News Chronicle*.

Even to mention that list is to exhibit the poverty of the left-wing voice in today's Fleet Street. The extraordinary situation today is that there is not a single national daily newspaper that can be expected to give *full* support to the Labour Party come polling day.

Obviously the closest Kinnock will get to that will come from Robert Maxwell's Mirror Group. Maxwell has pledged the *Mirror*'s support for Labour in the coming election and there is no reason to doubt that he will keep his word.

Even so, it is no secret that the Labour Party hierarchy fear that the *Mirror* will remain highly critical of Labour's defence policy, and perhaps even openly and increasingly hostile. Robert Maxwell does not agree with Neil Kinnock's non-nuclear defence policy and has frequently said so — not least through his editorial columns. There are also other areas of Maxwellian doubt about aspects of Labour Party policy which cast anxious shadows across the Party's leadership.

What then of the new, yet-to-be-born from the Holborn Circus stable, the *London Daily News*?

Under the editorship of ex-*Observer* journalist Magnus Linklater the new paper will be the most 'up-market' and serious product to emerge from the Maxwell newspaper group. Moreover its launch date, 10 February 1987, seems likely to mark the official opening for Fleet Street's election campaigning.

Nonetheless the *Daily News* could well have an influence beyond the present reach even of the *Daily Mirror*, despite a circulation of less than one sixth of its big sister. The fact is that the *Daily News* has now switched away from its original objective as a strictly London competitor to the *Evening Standard*. It will be a 5-day 24-hour paper (not publishing Saturdays or Sundays) of a kind we have not previously seen in Britain. It will compete with the London editions of the national dailies as well as with the afternoon and early evening run of the *Standard* (and with radio and TV news). The paper's circulation target has been set by Maxwell at half a million and it will concentrate on an area within the M25 London ringroad zone. But it will also reach out to specific high-population concentrations in the South-east like Reading, Milton Keynes, Southampton and, of course, Oxford.

Not even the *Daily News*?

Linklater's paper will in fact be a kind of 'mini-national' with an obvious potential to become fully national quite quickly. It will, however, as Linklater himself insists, be 'politically independent from the rest of the Mirror Group papers. We will pursue our own political line. That doesn't mean we'll be wishy washy. The paper will not lack character — or a strong political view'. What it will *not* be is predictably (or even unpredictably) pro-Labour from scratch, nor is there any guarantee at all that the *Daily News* will urge its readers to vote Labour on polling day.

Still, it will have at least one important consolation to offer Neil Kinnock: Linklater has appointed the *Daily Mirror*'s Julia Langdon as his political editor; she is strongly pro-Labour as well as being an excellent journalist.

There is of course the dawning prospect of the *News on Sunday* which is scheduled to be launched in the spring (probably April) and dedicated to radical causes virtually by statute.

Whether the *NoS will* rise in the spring remains an open question. A most extraordinary pre-launch struggle for power and journalistic principle is being waged between John Pilger, appointed editor-in-chief but resigned before Christmas, and the group round the editor, Keith Sutton, whom Pilger accuses of 'pop-radicalism' of a Murdoch-*Sun* variety.

This remarkable public debate over an unborn embryo (which is appearing in the *New Statesman*: see p.12) is itself unique by any standards of Fleet Street launches. There is nothing in any of this controversy that can bring serious political comfort to the Labour Party leadership — nor indeed to those of us who have, for years, longed to see the re-launch of a substantial national paper of the left.

From the rest of the Fleet Street field Kinnock can expect little mercy. The *Guardian* is regarded by the Labour leadership as 'utterly eccentric' in political terms. Moreover the *Guardian* is increasingly disturbed by the success and vigour of Whittam-Smith's *Independent* and seems to have been driven further in search of an Alliance or even a wet-Tory readership. The *Independent*, still holding a readership of between 300-350,000 has already collected an impressive number of ex-*Times* readers and has penetrated the *Daily Telegraph* market in important southern, middle-class suburban areas — as well as attracting disgruntled ex-*Guardian* buyers.

Yet there is no solace for Neil Kinnock in the *Independent*'s success story. The paper's policy is more to the right than was expected at the time of its launch. Perhaps it doesn't want to frighten potential middle-class readers: more likely the paper's editors are themselves on the right.

As for the rest . . . well, none of the tabloids who have given such unstinting and slavish support to Mrs Thatcher are nervous enough about the prospect of a Labour landslide to hedge any of *their* bets. They know where *their* knighthoods and peerages are stored.

The problems that Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party face in all this would have been serious enough without the Tebbit onslaught on the BBC.

Whatever the BBC's insiders may claim about retaining their editorial integrity *despite* Norman Tebbit (and I believe their claims), there is no doubt that the Tebbit sabre has left serious scars. That damage will not have disappeared by election time. Tebbit's campaign, despite what a good many political observers believed at the start, was no aberration from an emotionally super-charged and slightly nutty Tory chairman. It was clever as well as malicious; it was just as cynical and contrived as Nigel Lawson's autumn economic statement and part of the same strategy. Mrs Thatcher is desperate to win that precious third term and nothing, within legal limits, will be allowed in the path of the Prime Minister and her henchmen. No trick will go unemployed; no truth offered without 'economy'.

The Prime Minister knows that a decisive third electoral victory would inflict grave damage on radical opinion in Britain and on the political muscle of the Left, in particular the trade unions. That is her mission and it will be reflected overwhelmingly by the national press.

One of the country's most senior and distinguished TV executives told me the other day — reflecting on the Tebbit affair — that he despaired now of the national press, and especially the collapse of any radical voice. 'What people don't realise,' he lamented, 'is that the absence of any strong radical, anti-establishment voice in Fleet Street is one of the main reasons for the decline in TV standards — and political courage. I don't believe Tebbit would have got away with it in the days when we had papers like the old *Herald* or the *News Chronicle* . . .'. Maybe not.

But we haven't got them; and it isn't 1945.

Still, perhaps the great media bias (incidentally, that is *against* the left, Norman Tebbit may wish to note!) will not turn out to be such a serious disadvantage to Labour. Maybe the electorate have begun to notice . . . □

Geoffrey Goodman is the former Industrial Editor of Mirror Group Newspapers.

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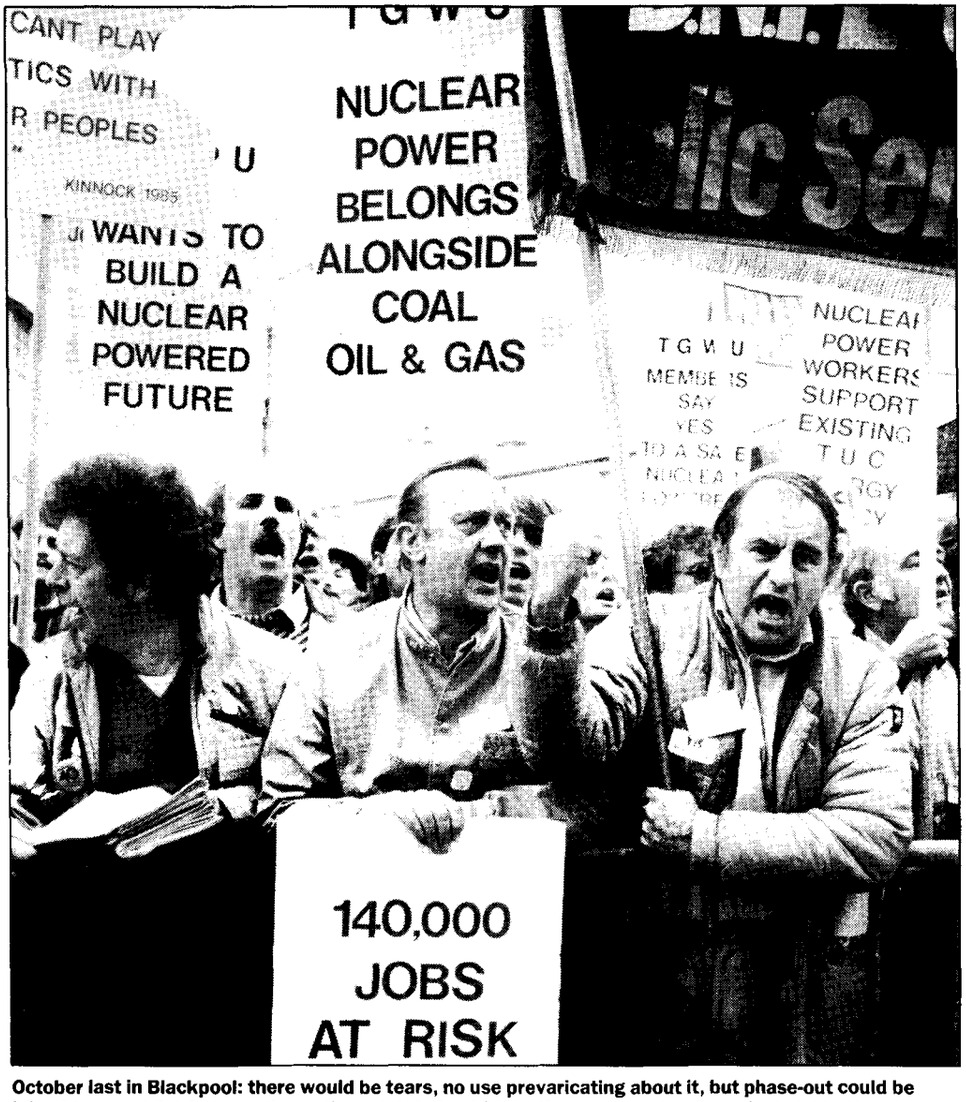
How to phase out nuclear power — without tears

Labour is committed to ending our dependence on nuclear-generated electricity.* ROB EDWARDS *argues that the clash with the commitment to save jobs and reduce unemployment* can *be overcome



Andrew Wiard/Report

October last in Blackpool: there would be tears, no use prevaricating about it, but phase-out could be joined to a massive increase in employment derived from other energy sources and uses

THEIR FACES betrayed anger, with a hint of desperation. They waved banners, shook fists and handed out leaflets. They mixed threat, fear and good humour just like hundreds of other demonstrations.

The difference was their cause. They had come to the Winter Gardens in Blackpool to demonstrate in favour of nuclear power. They had come as trade unionists under the auspices of the newly-formed National Campaign for the Nuclear Industry to the Labour Party's annual conference because they believed that if Labour agreed to phase out Britain's dependence on nuclear electricity, their livelihoods — and those of their children — would be threatened.

Their protest cannot be dismissed with a few ill thought-out sentences in a manifesto. It goes to the heart of Labour's nuclear dilemma. How can the Party's promise to abandon nuclear power match its intention of reinvigorating industry? How can it deliberately destroy jobs when its overriding priority is to reduce unemployment?

The answer is that it probably *can*, but only if rather more effort is devoted into working out precisely how. To his credit, Labour's energy spokesperson, Stan Orme MP, has at last begun to tackle the problem by privately asking a group of expert advisers to help him develop detailed policies for the next election. They spent a quiet two days in Bishops Stortford at the end of November discussing a draft energy policy paper, which is now being revised. But it is clear that there is still a long way to go before nuclear power can be abandoned without tears.

Any sensible strategy would proceed in four separate stages. The first, relatively simple, step would be to close down Britain's oldest two nuclear stations — Calder Hall, at Sellafield in Cumbria, and Chapelcross in Dumfriesshire. They are run by British Nuclear Fuels plc to provide essential ingredients for nuclear weapons (plutonium from the former and both plutonium and tritium from the latter) and they employ a comparatively small number of people (1,030 in total). They also generate a negligible amount of electricity for the grid (200 megawatts each).

The second stage would be the closure of all the nine first generation Magnox stations run by the electricity boards (Berkeley, Bradwell, Dungeness A, Hinkley Point A, Hunterston A, Oldbury on Severn, Sizewell A, Trawsfynydd and Wylfa). Seven of them are already beyond their original 20-year design life and between them they provide some 3,700 megawatts to consumers — the equivalent of only two large coal-fired stations.

The third stage would be to shut down, or not to start up, the seven Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR) stations (Hinkley Point B, Hunterston B, Dungeness B, Hartlepool, Heysham I, Heysham II and Torness). The first of these were commissioned in 1976, while Heysham II and Torness are due to begin coming on stream later this year. If they work properly — and there are some doubts that they ever will — the AGRs are meant to provide a much larger chunk of Britain's electricity demand (some 9,000 megawatts).

The final and most difficult stage involves the gradual run-down of all the other major nuclear facilities — the reprocessing and waste treatment complex at Sellafield, the fuel fabrication plant at Springfields, the enrichment plant at Capenhurst, the research laboratories at Harwell and the fast breeder development establishment at Dounreay. The reactors which have been shut down will somehow have to be safely decommissioned and vast quantities of nuclear waste will somehow have to be safely disposed of.

THERE IS now little doubt that the implementation of such a four-stage strategy is technically and economically feasible, although the timescale adopted is obviously critical. The *Shut Them Down* report published by Greenpeace in September argued that, if urgent measures were

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taken, it would be possible to switch off every single reactor within the lifetime of the next parliament without increasing the risk of power cuts. This would add, the report estimated, about 10 per cent onto electricity bills.

Such a strategy deliberately stretched political reality to its limits. It was designed to provoke and within a matter of hours *had* provoked the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) into a somewhat extravagant counter-attack ('ludicrous and irresponsible', '50 per cent increase in electricity prices', 'the lights would go out'). When pressed the CEGB said it would in fact take 20-25 years to complete a phase-out. The parameters of the debate had been set.

Somewhere between Greenpeace's four years and the CEGB's 25 years, there *must* be a realistic timescale. The favourite at the moment is that being advocated by one of Stan Orme's energy advisers, economics lecturer Stephen Fothergill. In a recent report for the Coalfield Communities Campaign, he has suggested that all the Magnox reactors, including Calder Hall and Chapelcross, could be closed by 1990, followed by all the AGRs between 1995 and 2000. This would guarantee security of supply and, like the Greenpeace strategy, put electricity prices up by 10 per cent. It would involve the building of three large new coal-fired stations (6,000 megawatts in all) and the development of an extra 25-40 million tonnes of colliery capacity.

Unanimity on one point

The fact that Fothergill and Greenpeace both agree on the extra cost of a phase out tends to suggest that they might be right. At least, in contrast to the Central Electricity Generating Board, they have fully set out all the assumptions behind their calculations. The 10 per cent cost penalty arises because, although nuclear power stations are very expensive to build, they are relatively cheap to run due to the low price of uranium. In view of the perceived dangers of nuclear power, consumers may be prepared to accept such a burden spread over ten or fifteen years. Any government, if it wished, could substantially reduce the impact on electricity prices by revising the strict financial limits currently imposed on the power industry.

Properly planned, the extinction of nuclear electricity by the end of the century could create more jobs than it destroys. Employment in the coalmining industry would increase by between 32-39,000. A further 100,000 jobs could be created every year for ten years by the implementation of an effective energy efficiency programme including home insulation, better heating controls, independent energy advice and the development of Combined Heat and Power systems in cities. This compares with a tentatively estimated 26,000 job losses in the nuclear industry (see table). By 2000, perhaps 11,000 people would still be working at former nuclear sites, decommissioning nuclear stations, storing and treating nuclear waste, and researching non-nuclear energy sources.

Employment and possible job losses in nuclear industry

	Employment in 1986	Job losses by 2000 if nuclear power phased out
Nuclear power stations	10,000	7,000
British Nuclear Fuels	13,000	10,000
Nuclear research	12,000	8,000
Regulatory bodies	2,000	1,000
TOTAL	37,000	26,000

Source: Fothergill, 1986.

The numbers are unavoidably crude. They assume, for example, that the entire nuclear workforce will behave as one study of 600 workers at one power station has suggested. According to the University College of North Wales, 100 of the workers at the Trawsfynydd nuclear station were willing to take early retirement and half of them were prepared to be redeployed by the CEGB, leaving just 200 looking for work locally. Even if such a pattern proves universal, how will 210 former Chapelcross workers be able to find alternative work in job-starved rural Dumfriesshire? How on earth can 770 ex-Dounreay staff possibly earn a non-nuclear living in Caithness? Certainly not by researching wind, wave and tidal power, as Labour's National Executive Committee has suggested.

IT IS EVEN more difficult to assess indirect job gains and losses. The government and nuclear industry have repeatedly said that anything between 100,000 and 150,000 jobs ultimately depend on nuclear power. The fact that no new power stations of any kind have been ordered since Torness and Heysham in 1978 has already created a crisis in the power engineering industry. Boilermakers Babcock Power announced last month that it was axing a quarter of the workforce — 620 jobs — at its Renfrew plant in Scotland. A report published in November by trade unions and district councils in Tyne and Wear warned that 'the crunch has come' for Northern Engineering Industries, the Tyneside-based maker of boilers and generators. In both cases trade union demands for more nuclear stations — even for the US-style Pressurised Water Reactor at Sizewell, in Suffolk — have, post-Chernobyl, been transformed into an urgent campaign for two large new coal-fired stations.

Substantially increasing our dependence on coal does of course raise the spectre of being 'held to ransom' by the miners. But since their glorious defeat in March 1985 it is difficult to imagine the National Union of Mineworkers regaining the heart for a fight for a long time. If coal production was being expanded, an industrial battle would be much less likely in any case.

More importantly, a coal-fired future does beg two key questions: how can its serious environmental problems (accidents, acid raid, and the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere) be minimised? And how can Britain's long-term energy requirements be met when fossil fuels do eventually run out? The answers lie, almost inevitably, with the renewable energy resources based on solar, biomass, geothermal, wind, hydro, tidal and wave power. A recent study by Friends of the Earth — thought by some to be too conservative — estimated that such sources could provide at least 20 per cent of Britain's energy needs within 40-50 years and perhaps half or more by 2050.

THERE ARE formidable technical barriers to extinguishing nuclear energy. No commercial scale reactors anywhere in the world have yet been successfully decommissioned. It is easy to switch them off, comparatively easy to remove their irradiated fuel and all the ancillary buildings, but rather difficult to know what to do with the large hulks of radioactive concrete and steel that remain. British Nuclear Fuels has so far set aside £71.2 million for decommissioning costs on the assumption that its facilities will be left standing where they were built for ever. The electricity boards, in contrast, have set aside £736 million on the assumption that their nuclear plants will sit around decaying for up to 100 years and then be completely dismantled and removed.

The latter option, if it is ever pursued, would give rise to enormous volumes of radioactive waste. The amount of intermediate level waste from taking apart all Britain's nuclear power stations would be about 128,000 cubic metres, compared to the 180,000 cubic metres expected to arise from all other sources by 2030. The House of Commons Environment Select Committee has pointed out that, depending on the timescales involved, the volumes of waste from decommissioning could exceed all the rest.

The political problems of disposing of even small amounts of radioactive waste are immense: but they will have to be solved regardless of the future of nuclear power. The solution currently favoured by environmentalists is to stop reprocessing the spent fuel from reactors wherever possible and to keep it above ground at existing nuclear sites in specially constructed dry stores, accompanied by some low and intermediate level waste facilities. It may be that the Prototype Fast Reactor at Dounreay will be able to be used to 'burn' some of the dangerous long-lived high level wastes. Opposition to some or all such schemes is likely, although it should be much easier to deal with in the context of a nuclear phase-out.

A future Labour government committed to carrying out the kind of anti-nuclear policy agreed at the last annual conference would immediately run into fierce opposition from the pro-nuclear power lobby. As well as the publicly owned parts of the industry (the electricity boards, BNFL, the UK Atomic Energy Authority), it would be faced by a wide range of influential private companies with an interest in nuclear power (such as the General Electric Company and the US company, Westinghouse), large parts of the Departments of Energy and Industry, and the military establishment. It would have to tackle what Tony Benn, when Energy Secretary, said was the best organised scientific, industrial and technical lobby he had ever known.

It would also have to counter one key theoretical argument which frequently seems to get an irrational hold on people: the notion that nuclear power cannot be disinvented so it cannot be abandoned. Strictly speaking, we cannot forget the atomic knowledge we have learned. But we can choose not to use it. □

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MEDIA

'Arab Pigs' and the Attorney-General

Geoffrey Bindman

THE PRESS COUNCIL has ruled (8 December) that the *Sun* was guilty of an 'ugly piece of racism' in publishing a cartoon which compared Arabs unfavourably to pigs. That's good: the cartoon caused enormous offence among the Arab community in Britain. But it is only one illustration of a habit of anti-Arab racism in the popular press which seems to take for granted that Arabs are either terrorists or shoplifters. The Press Council, moreover, is a toothless watchdog; it is unlikely that the *Sun* will take the ruling seriously and other papers will take even less notice.

Yet there *is* a watchdog who does have teeth to bite those who incite racial hatred: the Attorney-General. Section 5A of the Public Order Act 1936 (as amended by s.70 of the Race Relations Act 1976) embodies the criminal offence of incitement to racial hatred. Prosecutions may only be brought by or with the approval of the Attorney General. Of course, he can only decide to prosecute if the prospects of a conviction are reasonable. His failure to prosecute in the Arab pigs case is very strange because at first he seems to have been satisfied that the prospects were good enough.

The story began last January. The Home Office had on compassionate grounds allowed one of the Libyans expelled following the tragic murder of a policewoman in St James's Square to come back into Britain. On 23 January the *Sun* plastered its front page with the headline 'Arab Pig Sneaks Back'. A Mr Jones of Northwich, Cheshire, complained to the Press Council that the headline was 'racist and insulting'. The complaint was rejected on 14 May. The Press Council said: 'Although the description "Arab pig" was intemperate, the Press Council does not find it was racist. The Council accepts it was intended to refer specifically to those who were in the Libyan Embassy when the policewoman was murdered.'

Inevitably the *Sun* exulted at this exoneration, brushing aside the important distinction on which it depended, between a slur on one particular Arab and one directed at Arabs in general.

Next day's cartoon by Franklin, the regular cartoonist, depicted a group of pigs approaching the gates of Fortress Wapping. A security guard is saying into his walkie-talkie: 'Trouble, now the pigs object to being called Arabs'. Here plainly was a wholesale smear on all Arabs.

On the instructions of the League of Arab States, I invited the Attorney-General to prosecute the *Sun* for incitement to racial hatred. My letter to him was acknowledged by his legal secretary Mr D. N. Kirk on 18 June. Mr Kirk's letter said that the Attorney-General had asked the Director of Public Prosecutions to make enquiries and that a decision would be taken 'in due course'. I had a telephone conversation with Mr Kirk on 30 June when he said the police were having to interview people and the DPP had also been asked to get the advice of counsel. On 23 July, Mr Kirk telephoned to say that the police investigation had been completed, counsel's advice had been received and the papers were going to the Attorney-General that day. He expected a decision within two or three days.

On 30 July Mr Kirk rang again to tell me the glad tidings that the Attorney-General had decided to prosecute. He asked me to ask my clients not to give publicity to the decision for the time being, because the *Sun* had not yet been told. Naturally, I agreed. Next day a letter arrived from Mr Kirk unequivocally confirming the decision to prosecute and apologising for further delay because of the need for the police still to obtain some formal statements. I replied expressing the willingness of the Director of the Arab League's London office to make a formal statement. A few days later a chief inspector from Scotland Yard got in touch to arrange to meet the Director.

SO FAR, so good. Up to now all had gone smoothly. As Mr Kirk had asked, the Arab League gave no publicity to the Attorney's decision.

> ***There is a watchdog who has teeth to bite those who incite racial hatred: the Attorney-General. Of course, he can only prosecute if the prospects of a conviction are reasonable. But in the Arab pigs case he seems at first to have been satisfied that the prospects were good***

The *Observer*, however, got wind of the impending prosecution and published a brief report on 10 August. Two days later I received a remarkable letter from the Attorney-General's office, this time not from Mr Kirk but from his fellow Legal Secretary, Mr S. J. Wooler. It claimed that Mr Kirk's latter of 30 July confirming the Attorney-General's decision to prosecute the *Sun* 'did not accurately set out the position of the Attorney-General'. It enclosed a copy of a letter addressed to the editor of the *Sun* 'clarifying the situation'.

The letter to the *Sun* began by referring to a telephone conversation the previous day (i.e. the Sunday on which the *Observer* report had appeared) between Mr Wooler and a *Sun* reporter, John Kay. It set out the Attorney-General's practice in dealing with complaints alleging racial incitement, pointing out that after making a preliminary assessment he would refer the matter to the DPP for police enquiries and then make a final decision after receiving a police report. It went on to claim that he had not yet made that decision because he had not yet re-considered what Mr Kirk had both said and written. It ended by saying that the police enquiries would now be expedited.

ODDLY, however, when I telephoned the chief inspector at Scotland Yard a few days later to make final arrangements for his meeting with the Director of the Arab League, he told me that he had been instructed not to make any further enquiries.

On 22 August, a letter arrived from the Attorney-General's office, this time signed by yet another legal secretary, Miss J. L. Wheldon, telling me that the Attorney-General had now decided that it would *not* be appropriate for proceedings to be brought against the *Sun*.

I wrote to the Attorney-General and asked for an explanation. Reports had reached me that the Attorney-General had been contacted by a well-known solicitor representing the *Sun* after the *Observer* report had appeared. My clients were naturally very concerned that their request for legal action to be taken against the *Sun* had been turned down in such puzzling circumstances.

Far from denying that a personal approach had been made to him on behalf of the *Sun*, the Attorney-General in his reply acknowledged that he received an enquiry on behalf of the newspaper 'as to whether a conclusion on the question of prosecution had been reached.'

He did not disclose the identity of the enquirer. Sir Michael says that he told the enquirer that a letter had already been sent to the newspaper's lawyers telling them of the conclusion he had already reached. It seems that these lawyers had not had time to tell their clients.

MY LETTER asked a number of questions which still remain unanswered. What caused the Attorney-General to change his mind, having apparently been satisfied after receiving counsel's opinion and a police report that a prosecution was merited? If a legal secretary communicated inaccurate information, was any disciplinary action taken? If there was a misunderstanding about so important a matter, what does this tell us about the administration of the Attorney-General's office?

The most implausible part of the whole affair is the claim that further police enquiries were needed. What after all did Sir Michael need to know that was not obvious from the cartoon itself and the fact that it was published for millions of *Sun* readers? What did the police tell him?

On 3 November Roy Hughes MP asked the Attorney-General whether he would make a statement on his decision not to prosecute the *Sun* newspaper regarding the cartoon. Sir Michael Havers said in his reply, reported in Hansard, that his decision was taken 'on the basis of all the relevant circumstances including as one — I stress one — of the factors, a mistake in my Department which arose from a misunderstanding between myself and an official and led to the complainants being wrongly informed that I had decided to prosecute. The true position was I simply wished police enquiries to be made.'

This answers *none* of the questions adequately and a proper explanation is still awaited. □

Geoffrey Bindman is a solicitor.

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ECONOMICS

North and South

John Goddard

RELEASE of the 1986 employment estimates on Thursday, previewed in last Sunday's *Observer* (see figures below), suggests that regions outside the South East, East Anglia and the South West have borne the brunt of a net decline of 1.6 million jobs since 1979; the southern regions which contain nearly half the population account for only 6 per cent of the employment decline.

While there may be considerable arguments about the precise figures, the numbers have already been used by the Labour Party's regional affairs spokesman and will no doubt also strengthen the arm of conservatives like Michael Heseltine, Peter Walker and Edward Heath who have been pressing for more attention to be paid to the North-South divide. But the reality is well known: some of it is inevitable — though it is also capable of being improved by assistance it is not now getting.

Regional breakdown of the 1.6m employee jobs lost and gained between June 1979 and 1986

East Anglia	+ 23,000
South East	− 73,000
South West	− 39,000
West Midlands	− 301,000
North West	− 278,000
Yorkshire/Humberside	− 266,000
The North	− 215,000
East Midlands	− 118,000
Scotland	− 149,000
Wales	− 130,000
Northern Ireland	− 64,000

There are many facets to the changing distribution of jobs in Britain that underlie these figures. Perhaps the most obvious is the shift out of manufacturing into services. But it is important to remember that manufacturing employment started to fall absolutely from the mid-1960s, with the pace of decline accelerating after 1973 and really plummeting after 1979. The North has borne the brunt of this decline not only in traditional issues like steel, shipbuilding and heavy engineering but also in some of the new industries attracted to these areas with government assistance during the 1960s. The West Midlands with its heavy dependence on the car industry has also been affected by the general decline of manufacturing.

Services, in particular public services, partially compensated for the decline of manufacturing jobs in the regions up until the mid-1970s. But since then the public sector has ceased to fulfil this role. At the same time, the cumulative effects of high levels of unemployment have inevitably fed through into a declining demand for consumer services in the North. Moreover, the North has not benefitted significantly from the growth of services to business where demand is generated from company headquarters in London.

Perhaps more significant than the shift from manufacturing to services has been the changing occupational structure of employment. Take examples: Tyne & Wear and Berkshire. The table below shows that the former area has a heavy emphasis on low level industrial occupations, 'craftsmen' and low level services and it is these types of employment which have been most affected by technological change. By contrast Berkshire, which does contain a significant amount of manufacturing activity, has a stronger representation of higher level industrial occupations.

Skills Quotient 1981

Grade	Berkshire	Tyne & Wear
Managerial	1.07	0.79
Higher service	1.19	0.85
Higher industrial	1.62	0.89
Lower services	1.02	1.09
Craft/Foremen	0.89	1.22
Lower industrial	0.80	1.01

(The Quotient is the proportion of the local employed workforce with the specified skills divided by the national proportion with that skill: a quotient of 1.00 defines the national average.)

THESE CONTRASTS represent deep-seated structural differences between a blue collar North and a white collar South that have been building up over many decades. The differences feed through into the ability of areas to generate new economic activity through industrial innovation in existing businesses and in new business foundations — because it is groups like R & D workers and financial managers who play a key role in product innovation and new business formation. And each new merger wave seems to result in a further reduction in the number of headquarters in provincial cities as duplicate research and administrative departments are combined in London and the South East.

> ***'Those arguing for regional development agencies do so on economic as well as social grounds. It is increasingly recognised that many of the obstacles to successful economic adjustment in the UK are local as well as national in character'***

The distance-shrinking ability of telecommunications seem at the same time to make it easier for companies to control production in the North from London, while continuing to enjoy the rich network of personal contacts between the financial institutions, government and the media that the capital offers. These same technologies also make it easier for financial institutions to tap regional savings for the benefits of the international financial system.

How inevitable are these tendencies and can government do anything to counteract them? Regional disparities are a feature of most market economies and past attempts at intervention have not proved very successful, partly because they have treated symptoms rather than deep underlying causes and have sought immediate effects. The free marketeers in the government look to a downward pressure on wages in the North, and shortages of skills and land in the South, to encourage the diversion of some industry. But there are few signs of this happening and every indication that, as in the past geographically specific skill shortages will hold back economic growth and contribute to inflationary pressures in the economy at large.

THERE are also doubts as to whether a policy of diverting growth to the North is sufficient on its own to re-build local economies capable of self-sustained economic development. Hence the demand for development agencies modelled along the lines of the Scottish Development Agency which lead in the attraction of new industries and link them with measures designed to build on existing strengths and stimulate new enterprise formation.

Those arguing for regional development agencies do so on economic as well as social grounds. It is increasingly recognised that many of the obstacles to successful economic adjustment in the UK are local as well as national in character. For example, new technology is installed in particular offices and factories and the relevant skills and know-how are still transmitted through personal relations between customers, suppliers and training agencies. The decline of the North therefore represents a major constraint on the economy at large, not just because of transfer payments associated with unemployment and social security benefits.

Prior to an election, the political will to do something about the regional problem is most likely to arise in the South. Here there are increasing pressures for some re-introduction of regional planning as the demand for land development threatens many of the attractive residential environments which the nation's managerial elites hold dear.

But even if the political will exists, any attempt to introduce effective regional planning in the UK is beset with difficulties. One major obstacle is in the departmental organisation of central government. Careful examination of the prosperity of the South reveals that it is not entirely dependent on private enterprise: the high technology end of defence expenditure, government research laboratories, mortgage tax relief, commuter subsidies to British Rail, and the expansions of London's Airports are all major elements of public expenditure which *incidentally* have strengthened the economy of the South East.

The regional problems strike right at the heart of the way in which Britain is governed: and it is one of those issues which politicians and administrators prefer not to deal with in any fundamental way. □

John Goddard is Professor of Regional Development Studies in the University of Newcastle-upon Tyne.

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'Stab-in-the-back' culture

Oliver North, exposed by Irangate as the phantom in Reagan's basement, 'has a dream'.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

details the paranoia of the American right and its favourite son 'Ollie', a national hero to the President

Washington

IN JULY of last year, there took place a three-day meeting of the Pentagon's Institute for National Strategic Studies. One of the participants, Mr David Turkheimer of Atlanta, Georgia, has since made his misgivings public. Mr Turkheimer, a programme analyst in the war game simulation business, didn't like the tone of a speech given by Colonel Oliver North:

> As he warmed to the task and realised that, surrounded by political allies, he was preaching to the choir, his talk became more free-wheeling. His hostility to the freedom of the press became more open and he came very near to calling the *Washington Post* traitorous. He moved on to denouncing the Sandinistas and praising the contras — a connection to counter-terrorism policy (the topic of his speech) that at the time I found strange but in the light of recent revelations now seems revealing. He added other dubious linkages as well: at one point dragging in a critic's opposition to nuclear power as being proof of the latter's inability to have a legitimate position on foreign policy. Such statements, combined with his continual interrupting of his talk to say to the ceiling 'Got that, Ivan?', did nothing to allay my growing suspicion that North was exhibiting symptoms of a paranoid personality.

Anyone who has ever been to a gun-club convention, or hung out with the boozier element at conferences of the extreme right, has in effect met Oliver North. Here you meet the people who think that the Vietnam war was lost by the *New York Times* and CBS News. Lachrymose rounds of drinks are proffered by characters who think that the lesson of the Bay of Pigs is that we must have air cover next time. This is the culture of the 'stab-in-the-back'. It's been a journalistic standby, in periods when the news is slow, ever since the Goldwater campaign. And it's re-surfacing now as it becomes clearer that the President of the United States is a consecrated, paid-up member of the 'stab in the back' fraternity.

AP

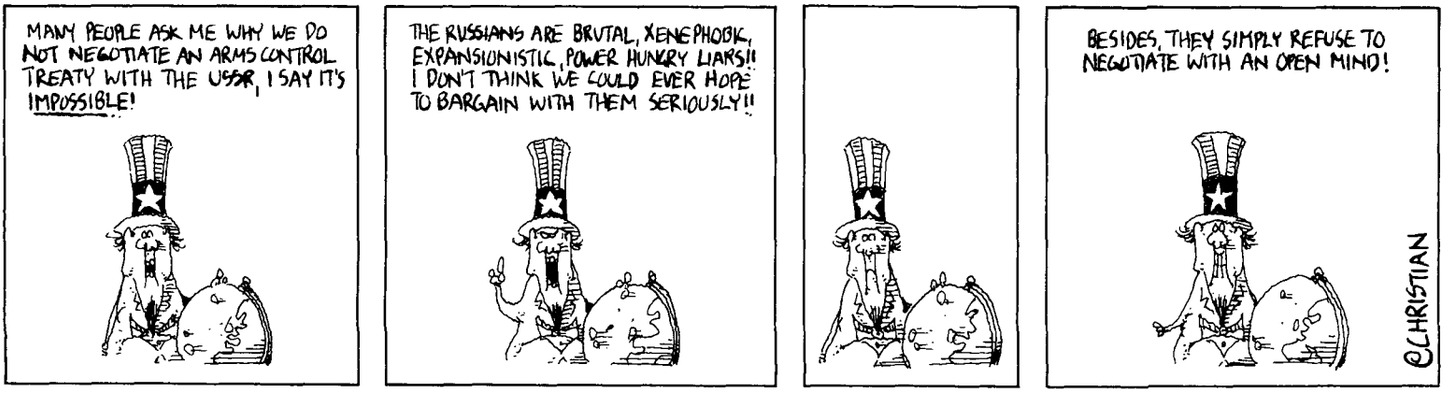
You can say this for Ollie — he's made the wellsprings of 'the Reagan doctrine' plain to just about anyone who cares to know

Armed with Reagan's authority, Oliver North made the rounds. His chief collaborator was a man named Carl Channell. Channell is a very busy man, who has borrowed from the enemy the idea of the front organisation. With one hat, he heads the Anti-Terrorism America Committee, a pressure group that made an impact in last autumn's Congressional elections. With another, he is president of Western Goals Foundation, a subsidiary of the John Birch Society. (The last head of this society, Congressman Larry McDonald, was among the passengers on flight KAL 007. The John Birchers have never repudiated the view of their founder that President Eisenhower was 'a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy'.)

North gave Channell a 'freedom fighter' medal at a fund-raising dinner for the contras in Washington last year, and was on call for all his publicity stunts. When Channell ran a TV advertising campaign against the Democratic candidate in the Maryland Senatorial elections last November, the pro-Reagan candidate Linda Chavez found that the ads were so extreme that they benefitted the Democrat. She has now told the FBI, through her lawyer, that in her effort to stop the ads from rebounding she went to the White House and asked Oliver North for his help in getting them stopped. Since when, people are asking in astonished tones, do uniformed members of the National Security Council intervene in American Senate races?

IS THAT ALL? It's by no means all. Since Reagan came into power, several members of his kitchen cabinet have been active in a wealthy private lobby called the Council for National Policy. Membership, which costs an initial $5,000, includes the Reverends Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, the ultra-rightist millionnaires Nelson Bunker Hunt and Joseph Coors (the latter also a donor to the John Birch Society) and new right luminaries such as Arnaud de Borchgrave, Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie. You could say that the CNP comprised all of the stab in the back culture from the Reverend Moon to the National Rifle Association.

On 31 May last, in Nashville, Tennessee, Oliver North was invited to address this group (of which he is also a member). Since he was also a member of the National Security Council, he asked that his remarks be kept off the record. But a tape was made, and was obtained by the formidable Sidney Blumenthal of the *Washington Post*. In order to imagine the impact of this tape, you have to picture a senior member of MI6 giving a high-


MANY PEOPLE ASK ME WHY WE DO NOT NEGOTIATE AN ARMS CONTROL TREATY WITH THE USSR, I SAY IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
THE RUSSIANS ARE BRUTAL, XENEPHOBIC, EXPANSIONISTIC, POWER HUNGRY LIARS!! I DON'T THINK WE COULD EVER HOPE TO BARGAIN WITH THEM SERIOUSLY!!
BESIDES, THEY SIMPLY REFUSE TO NEGOTIATE WITH AN OPEN MIND!
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decibel pitch to a closed meeting of the Monday Club or the Salisbury Group, and calling for the overthrow of the Mugabe government in Mrs Thatcher's name.

North told his listeners that 'the most sophisticated disinformation and active measures campaign that we have seen in this country since Adolf Hitler has been launched against our support for the contras'. He attacked Congress, the press and official Washington for dithering, for paralysis and for disloyalty. And he left the audience in no doubt that he spoke for his President. It will be very hard for Congressional inquiries not to conclude the same.

In making an appeal for the contras, finally, he insisted that without a military victory for them there would be no choice but a full-scale American invasion of Nicaragua. North told Jack Wheeler, the man who originated 'the Reagan doctrine' of global support for anti-communist insurgency, of a recurrent nightmare. According to Wheeler, 'Ollie told me about a dream he had, a horrible nightmare. Ollie said. "I dreamed that our support of the contras failed. The Democrats had frustrated everything. We were left with a second Cuba. That has to go, one way or another. The Sandinistas have to go. So the President made the decision to invade. I was called back to the Marines. And I landed on the beach in Nicaragua. There facing me on the beach, with a rifle in his hands, was Adolfo Calero (the contra leader). He didn't want an American invasion. He wanted Nicaraguans to save their own country".'

This is the Ollie North version of 'I have a dream'. Some day, there ought to be a psycho-history of the curious effect that Latin American counter-revolutionaries have on the mentality of the American right. There is something compulsive about it. It was a bunch of Cuban exile fanatics who convinced John F. Kennedy that the masses would rise to greet them if he would only ferry them to the beaches of their island home. It was another bunch of Cuban exile fanatics who were employed by Richard Nixon to burgle the Watergate headquarters of the Democratic National Committee. Now, out of what looks like sheer love for a gang of Nicaraguan cut-throats and mercenaries, the Reagan administration has gambled and lost almost the entire store of its domestic and international credit. The North tapes make it quite clear that the decision to stake everything on the contras and to circumvent the Congress was a fully conscious one.

Many years ago, it now emerges, a young Marine officer wrote to William F. Buckley and begged to be invited onto his famous *Firing Line* programme. This young officer was determined to avenge the bad press that the US Army was getting in Vietnam. You have probably guessed his identity. The whole political career of Oliver North, and the recent political career of his President, can be read as an effort to wipe out the stain of defeat in Indochina, and to punish the bureaucrats and intellectuals who, in their make-believe world, let down the boys in the field. Later, they wanted to avenge the humiliations in Iran and Nicaragua, too. Now we can see the results of the stab in the back psychology. I never believed that the private foreign policy of Oliver North was a search for moderates in Iran. But it has become very clear that it was a search for extremists in the United States. □

PERMANENT GOVERNMENT

Select committees rattle the Whitehall tea cups

Peter Hennessy

A YEAR AGO today (9 January) Michael Heseltine walked out of the Cabinet Room. The Westland affair moved from faction fight to full-blooded crisis.

According to Whitehall legend this dramatic development in contemporary history is recorded, but elliptically, in the Cabinet minutes for that day. Part of the list of attenders reads as follows:

> The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, PC, MP, Secretary of State for Defence, present for items 1 and 2.

This is mandarin understatement at its finest. One is tempted to plagiarise the man who penned it and say it is economical with the truth.

The Westland crisis, rather like Suez, was a losers' affair. The casualty list was long: Heseltine, Leon Brittan, Mrs Thatcher's reputation and that of her immediate entourage in No. 10, senior officials in the Department of Trade and Industry privy to the leaking of the Solicitor-General's letter, Sir Robert Armstrong, the reluctant leak inquirer, and the standing of British industry as an independent producer.

Some reputations were enhanced. Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Solicitor-General, was confirmed as an honourable man. John Smith on Labour's front bench lived through his finest parliamentary hour. Less obviously, Parliament itself, through the medium of its select committees, fulfilled the crucial scrutiny function the constitution assigns to it.

In constitutional terms, 1986, for me, was the Year of the Select Committee. Three of them were central to the Westland aftermath. The Treasury and Civil Service Committee was already deep into its post-Ponting inquiry into the duties and responsibilities of ministers and civil servants when the crisis broke. It neatly gathered in the Westland fall-out.

The Defence select committee set up a special inquiry and produced an hour-by-hour reconstruction of the tortuous and complicated events of a year ago — an immediate boon to believers in the principle of accountability and a longer-lasting one to historians of politics, Parliament and Whitehall.

And, in the dying days of 1986, a third parliamentary body, the Liaison Committee, a kind of shop-stewards meeting of all the select committee chairpersons, issued a magisterial report promising a battle royal if the government tried to implement its post-Westland desire to prevent select committees inquiring into the actions of individual officials, an intention announced in October in the Prime Minister's reply to the Defence Committee report on the Westland affair.

'We find it impossible,' declared the select committee chairmen on 11 December, 'to reconcile the wording of this paragraph, which includes the sentence "The Government does not believe that a Select Committee is a suitable instrument for an inquiry into . . . the actions . . . of an individual civil servant", with the clear responsibility of a Select Committee to examine the administration of departments which necessarily involves taking evidence from officials directly involved in administration'.[1]

Mercifully, the behind-the-scenes activity on this issue is in the hands of two sensible and sensitive men — John Biffen, Leader of the House, and Terence Higgins, chairman of both the Treasury and Civil Service Committee and the Liaison Committee. By the end of the month I expect the government will have quietly dropped its attempt to reinterpret the rules of parliamentary accountability. When this happens, it should be the signal for yet another reappraisal of the 1979 reforms introduced by Mr Biffen's predecessor-but-two, Norman St John-Stevas.

> ***'By the end of the month I expect the government will have quietly dropped its attempt to reinterpret the rules of parliamentary accountability'***

Some, like the highly respected Gavin Drewry of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, editor of the standard work on the new select committees[2] (who uses the Mercalli scale for earthquakes to measure impact) remain sceptical.

He concluded, harshly in my view, that the select committees rate around Scale II 'felt by few; delicately poised objects may sway'. Dr Drewry made that assessment pre-Westland. For me, at least, three of the committees in 1986 rattled the tea cups in post-Westland Whitehall. If Biffen does back down, the St John-Stevas reforms will have passed the crockery test. □

[1] *Accountability of Ministers and Civil Servants to Select Committees of the House of Commons*, First Report from the Liaison Committee, Sessions 1986-87, HMSO, £1.80.
[2] Gavin Drewry (ed.) *The New Select Committees. A Study of the 1979 Reforms*, OUP, £25.00.

Peter Hennessy is a visiting Fellow at the Policy Studies Institute

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An old fighting party gives false answers

West Germany goes to the polls in a little over two weeks' time: and its Social Democrats have rarely been in worse shape for battle.

TONY CATTERALL ***reports from Bonn***

JUST A FEW months ago West Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) was riding high, charging confidently into the pre-campaign phase for the federal election to be held on 25 January. To be sure, very few people gave the party a chance of achieving an absolute majority in the Bundestag, which shadow Chancellor Johannes Rau declared as his goal: only the Christian Democrats have done that and then only once, under Adenauer in 1957. But it might have been close.

Now, as the Christmas festivities give way to the election campaign, the only tension left is over whether the conservatives will be able to shrug off the 'breaking-effect' of their junior coalition partner, the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), and form a government on their own: repeating Adenauer's success, 30 years on.

The SPD is fighting against three things: disillusionment in its own ranks; a feeling by a significant minority that the radical environmentalists of the Greens are a most effective opposition; and the incontestable fact that, apart from unemployment, the economic outlook is rosy.

The worst post-war results in state elections in deeply conservative Bavaria (27.5 per cent) and the 'natural' Social Democrat citadel of Hamburg (41.8 per cent) in the past two months had little to do with national issues, but much to do with the state of the party.

That state has been greatly weakened by that bastion of West German post war consensus, the German Trade Union Federation (DGB). It shot its SPD comrades in the foot in September, with the sale for just one mark (about 35 pence) of its effectively bankrupt housing firm, Neue Heimat, to an obscure West Berlin baker. The ruination of the giant firm — the largest landlord in Western Europe — by its union owners, and the unfolding of a chapter of inefficiency, corruption and sloth, proved once more that 'the Sozis can't deal with financial matters'.

More importantly, the election results branded the SPD as a loser, negating the effect of two stunning state victories last year. After Bavaria and Hamburg, the SPD stood at around 38 per cent in the national public-opinion polls, the figure it achieved in the 1983 federal election. By 2 December, a poll in *Die Welt* showed the SPD down to 32.4 per cent — the lowest since 1957, when Konrad Adenauer's Christian Democrat/Christian Social Union Alliance won an absolute majority. The same poll showed the Greens with 10.7 per cent — nearly double the party's 5.6 per cent showing in the 1983 general election.

A biting article in a recent issue of Stern magazine said the SPD — 'not just any old party, (but) the heart-muscle of German democracy' — was sick. The illness had a name: opportunism. 'It is the false answer from an old fighting party to a deep change in the internal climate: a rapidly increasing depoliticisation of West German society.'

THE CHARGE is at least half true. Johannes Rau has tried to rerun the essentially non-political campaign which confirmed him as Premier of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1986 with an increased majority. 'Reconciliation, not division' was the slogan he chose at the end of last year, when the party leadership forced him into accepting the candidacy. 'Politics is the most important thing in the world — for the newspapers', the 55-year old preacher's son had told 500 hand-picked guests at the rally which annointed him.

Panicked by taunts

Both the calling of 'Brother Johannes' — so-called because of his strong Protestant background and penchant for Biblical quotes — and the timing were fatal mistakes. There was no need for the party to even unofficially name a candidate more than a year ahead of the election, but the leadership was panicked by constant taunts from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its increasingly rabid Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU). Having given in to these charges that they were leaderless, Rau was 'the only possible' choice at the time. The candidate from 1983, Hans-Jochen Vogel, is an efficient, fighting politician but with the deadly dull image of a hectoring headmaster. And of a loser.

But selecting a solid 'man of the centre' meant the party's course was also clearly set. Despite the evidence that a reforming majority at the national level was possible only with the Greens, Rau shut them out from the start.

The party could have chosen the other great winner of 1985, the young, dynamic, demagogic Oskar Lafontaine who both overturned 30 years of CDU rule in the Saarland, and kept the Greens under the 5 per cent of the vote needed for representation. He had prepared his ground properly, offering the Greens a coalition well before the election and when they refused was able to fight a hard campaign with the credible claim that the only way to dislodge the CDU-FDP coalition in the Saarland was by giving him the majority.

But despite his unique success, the 'Ayatollah from the Saar' was seen at the time as too left wing, someone who with his total opposition to the civil use of nuclear power and demands that West Germany leave at least the military wing of Nato would scare away the voters of the centre. Rau's strategy of running after the centre, rather than trying to persuade it to move left, was judged to be the correct one.

Party chairman Willy Brandt, at 72 the grand old man of international democratic socialism, was too tired, too weak or too cautious to push the candidacy of his favourite 'political grandson' Lafontaine. It would have meant a vicious election campaign, while the immensely popular 'Brother Johannes' might have been able to swing it softly.

Brandt suffered a heavy defeat back in 1981 when he and the intellectual party general secretary, Peter Glotz, recognising the growing danger from the Greens, tried to force a change of perspective which would have made them superfluous. The trade union wing, with the support of then-Chancellor Helmut Schmidt who was firmly in charge of the parliamentary party, blocked the reorientation to what Glotz called 'the post-industrial middle class'. More than two years after losing power in Bonn, Glotz tried again, with an analysis of what was wrong with the party, an analysis which remains correct today.

'During the government period the SPD concentrated strongly on the tasks of government, administration and the selection of personnel; the development of a political culture in society and the continuing construction of a political consciousness among the population were neglected'. The party had lost its ability to campaign actively on issues, or even to find issues on which to campaign. It had to regain the ability to motivate people behind ideas of reform.

The issues are there; they have been handed over on a plate by Kohl's do-nothing, accident-prone government:

- Unemployment will not sink below 2 million (8 per cent of the workforce) in the foreseeable future;
- Poverty is growing amongst those out of work and their dependents as 'Savings Minister' Gerhard Stoltenberg puts tax cuts and balancing the Budget above all other priorities;
- A majority of the population is — after Chernobyl — opposed to the continuation of the nuclear-power programme;
- No attempt is being made to go to the root of the pollution problems caused by the chemicals industry;
- Relations with the Soviet Union are at a dismal low after Kohl's recent equation of party leader Mikhail Gorbachev with Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels, and his comparison of

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the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavik to the 1938 Hitler-Chamberlain meeting in Munich;
● A significant faction within the CDU — the 'Steel Helmet Group' — constantly undermines the attempts of Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher to push detente forward, and has effectively stalled the European disarmament process.

The Social Democrats have policies on all the major issues, but a lack of convincing political work over the past four years has meant that they are not getting through, are not believed, or are believed by the wrong people. One local SPD activist in Bonn put it thus: 'The Greens talk crap but they believe it, and the voters recognise it; we believe nothing and the voters know it'.

With a certain amount of puzzled despair a back-bench Member of Parliament who is worried about his seat, put it differently, but with the same, if unconscious, content. 'We have the problem of trying to appeal to two different groups', he said. 'Take nuclear power: the workers in the industry see our course as endangering their jobs; the opponents don't think we're going far enough. Or the chemicals industry. The environmentalists in my electorate were up in arms the other week at a leak into the Rhine from a Bayer plant. But the workers there — also my voters — see criticism as an attack on their jobs'.

It is exactly the same problem the SPD gave itself at the last federal election: a frantic jump on to the environment bandwagon — what then-prominent Green Petra Kelly called a 'coat of quick-dry Green paint' — which was believed only by traditional Social Democrat voters, who deserted the party in droves.

THE NUCLEAR ISSUE is in many ways the touchstone. More than two years ago a party congress resolved in principle to get out of the 'nuclear economy'. But it was only in May, after the Chernobyl disaster, that a commission was formed to find ways of implementing the policy.

It would be possible to dispense with nuclear power within a 10-year timespan, reported the commission's chairman, former Research and Technology Minister Volker Hauff — who during his time in office had been one of the industry's most fervent supporters. The SPD has claimed that phasing out nuclear power would have a negligible effect on the economy — claims later confirmed in independent reports commissioned and subsequently ignored by the government. But both claims and reports have had little effect on traditional Social Democrat voters.

On the other side, the seriousness of the SPD's commitment has been rubbished by the environmentalists, who read the fine print: even *beginning* the process could be achieved only within a broad consensus, taking in the CDU and the energy industry. In other words, never.

Senior party figures are already openly looking for someone who can come forward to pick up the pieces after what they expect to be a humiliation in January.

Willy Brandt is to step down as chairman in 1988 but none of his 'grandchildren' quite trust themselves to come forward yet. They agree on only one thing: the 'fathers' must not be allowed to retain control, or the party will be condemned to an even-longer stretch of ineffective opposition. □

Straightening the bent backs

***A brave voice has been raised in Anhui province on behalf of Chinese intellectuals, reports* JONATHAN MIRSKY**

WHILE HIS FRIENDS at Peking University were burning copies of the *Peking Daily* on Monday morning, a law student said: 'We think Deng Xiaoping could lead us and the whole people towards complete democracy in China. Our movement is to give democracy a hard push.'

Deng is interested in democracy, but only on his terms. In appealing to him, as another student had done in a four-page open letter the day before the burning of the *Peking Daily*, for its inaccurate reporting which they believe has aroused the public against them, the students may have forgotten Deng's hatred of 'bourgeois liberalism'.

Towards the end of the four weeks in which students marched in at least 12 cities, shoved the police out of the way, and flouted hastily-drafted regulations explicitly forbidding them from demonstrating without giving five days' notice, and excluding all dissenters from Peking's Tiananmen square, the major national and provincial newspapers warned that bourgeois liberalism was once again rearing its subversive head.

Bourgeois liberalism, in the party's traditional view, summarises all that is politically hateful about western politics: unpredictable change, open and continuous inter-party conflict, unrestrained individualism, and irresponsible and fundamental criticism of government, especially from the press.

Bourgeois liberalism is not an actual crime in China, but its periodic reappearance in the rich rhetoric of Chinese Communist party political abuse often heralds charges of counter-revolution, anti-party, and anti-state, all of which are proscribed in China's Criminal Code.

On New Year's Day, while the students were illegally marching on Tiananmen square, the party's *People's Daily* provided a political homily: 'The democracy which the Chinese people need today can only be the socialist democracy known as people's democracy, rather than the individualist democracy of the bourgeoisie.' Deng had put it even more plainly in July 1981: 'The essence of bourgeois liberalisation is opposition to party leadership.'

The party is quite right — in their banners, wall posters, and confrontations with officials, the students are demanding genuine local and provincial elections, a free press, free assembly and protest, the right to put up wall posters (these were made illegal by Deng in 1980) and the right to choose their own careers.

In fact none of this should attract the dreaded charge of being 'fan-dang', or anti-party. What the students demand is — in theory — already on offer as part of the political reform which only recently Deng himself called 'China's second revolution'.

In essence this involves the party 'stepping back' from its daily control of almost all aspects of Chinese life. For months before the demonstrations began in December, China's newspapers and magazines were crammed with articles dissecting the party's past and present weaknesses and failures, and discussions, without recourse to indirection or code, of alternative political forms, concepts, and institutions.

However, there was no timetable for any of these political changes, although economic reforms, including bankruptcy laws which sent a shiver through China's factories, were hastily brought forward. 'A high degree of democracy', which the party approves, is to descend, so to speak, at the party's call.

For the students, bestowing democracy will no longer suffice. Last week a wall poster went up at Peking University criticising one of Deng's main supporters, Vice-premier Wan Li. According to the poster, Wan had travelled recently to the Science and Technology University at Hefei, the capital of Anhui province. It was there, almost exactly a month ago, that students first marched to demand participation in elections to the provincial assembly, a right instantly granted.

The University's vice-president is Fang Lizhi, a noted astrophysicist, sometimes described as an ideological leader of the present student movement. Vice-premier Wan was reported to have told Fang that 'democracy is granted to the people by the leaders', which indicates, the poster commented, 'a master-slave relationship between the state and the people'.

Fang is said to have replied that democracy is not granted but 'is achieved through people's struggles'. Fang also demanded academic freedom and independence, which the Vice-premier rejected.

In party terms, Fang is definitely a 'bourgeois liberal'. On 24 November, only a fortnight before the demonstrations on the campus where he is vice-president, he gave an interview to the Shanghai *World Economic Herald*, entitled 'Fang Lizhi says that China's greatest tragedy is that its intellectuals have not yet been recognised as a leading force of social progress.' After pointing out that in global terms China is third from the bottom, just above Cambodia and Haiti, in its support for intellectuals and education, Fang said: 'Chinese intellectuals should straighten their bent backs . . . Once they show their independent character they would demonstrate their strength immediately.'

The official press is casting about for 'bad elements' which have 'treated the students like sheep'. Taiwan, the Voice of America, and ex-Red Guards have all been suggested. Before its rage focuses finally on the students themselves, the party should consider Vice-president Fang's judgement on today's young intellectuals: 'They have their own independent mentality and have begun to show a strong desire for mastering their own fate. All this is exactly what the present era needs.' □

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ARTS

MUSIC

Paris blues

Charles Fox

Despite Round Midnight *and, this Friday, BBC2's* Le Jazz Hot, *France is no longer the European King of Jazz*

ONE REASON why Afro-American syncopated music — first ragtime, then jazz — swept so effortlessly round the world had a lot to do with technology: piano-rolls, records, radio, films. Left to human beings alone the conquest would have taken longer or never happened at all.

This does not diminish the importance of jazz musicians glimpsed at work, the spectacle, as it were, of art in the flesh. Quite a few Americans turned up in London during the Twenties. Armstrong and Ellington toured Britain at the start of the Thirties. But a stalemate between musicians' unions on either side of the Atlantic put a stop to that for the next 20 years. Across the Channel the French were luckier.

Herbie Hancock goes so far as to call France 'the second country of jazz' within the first couple of minutes of the TV documentary *Le Jazz Hot*, to be transmitted this Friday evening, the concluding programme of BBC2's Jazz Week. Hancock, of course, was responsible for organising the music heard in Bernard Tavernier's film, *Round Midnight*, in which Dexter Gordon, a distinguished jazz player himself and once domiciled for years in Europe, gives authenticity to the role of 'Dale Evans', a fictional blending of the saxophonist Lester Young and — even more especially — the pianist Bud Powell, two musicians scarred more than most by the rigours of being black Americans. Clips of both Young and Powell turn up early on in *Le Jazz Hot*, along with recollections by Francis Paudras, whose befriending of Powell provided the real-life event — a trifle over-dramatised, maybe — around which Tavernier constructed his film.

A few white American players — the guitarist Jimmy Gourley, the drummer Al Levitt, the pianist and singer Blossom Dearie — make appearances too, but an underlying theme is the special attraction France held for black musicians. The nation that hounded Dreyfus has never been exactly free of racial prejudice, but, for a few decades at least, musicians such as the trumpeter Bill Coleman (born, ironically enough, in Paris, Kentucky), the saxophonists Don Byas and Johnny Griffin, and the drummer Kenny Clarke felt, as Griffin puts it, 'more comfortable there'. Byas even began announcing tune-titles with a French accent. Sidney Bechet, brought up speaking Creole patois in New Orleans, must have felt peculiarly at home on his first visit to Europe in 1919. When he died in France 40 years later he had become 'as famous as Chevalier, Piaf, Trenet and Montand', with a statue in a square named after him in Juan-les-Pins.

Val Wilmer/Format

Dexter Gordon, 1962 (not, as it happens, in Paris, but Piccadilly Circus)

European jazz fans before and just after WWII were inclined to assume that black jazz players were, *ipso facto*, superior to white ones. It was a period when jazz seemed an inexorably American music, pushed forward from time to time by black innovators. French fans, in particular, were notorious for worshipping even moderately talented black musicians while jeering at the likes of Gerry Mulligan, yet managing to stay chauvinistic about French groups and players. They did, of course, enjoy the impressive advantage of having on hand the guitarist Django Reinhardt — paradoxically, a gipsy born in Belgium and undoubtedly the first major jazz musician to surface outside the United States.

Not that Reinhardt was the earliest musician to play jazz in France. If *Le Jazz Hot* contains no more than snippets of Reinhardt in action (only newsreels seem to have been interested in filming him), there is a fascinating interview with Leo Vauchant, a trombonist who, as well as working in Jack Hylton's band, instructed Ravel in jazz counterpoint (they played 'Tea For Two' together) and was once — on cello this time — part of a quartet that performed for Proust in his bedroom ('His housekeeper used to make madeleines,' Vauchant recalls deadpan).

War-time subterfuge gets noted (the French Hot Club's HQ in Rue Chaptal housed a cache of arms for the Resistance). Resurrected too are the critical tiffs between the diehard Hugues Panassie ('The nearest thing jazz has had to F. R. Leavis', as Russell Davies points out in his commentary) and the bebop-admiring Charles Delaunay, the virtual inventor of discography. There is blunt speaking about both Mezz Mezzrow ('Musically he was shit,' says the drummer-turned-actor Moustache) and Sartre's grasp of jazz ('What he was really interested in was red wine — oh, and philosophy').

Too much space gets devoted to musical re-creations of the Fifties, scarcely any space at all to reporting about why France has retreated from the forefront of jazz, no longer 'the second country'. Good violinists turn up regularly; so do guitarists (Babik Reinhardt, incidentally, most laudably refuses to imitate his father's style), but no young horn players seem to have taken over from the old-timers. Most surprising of all for a country where artists were once obsessed with avant-gardism, the music seems curiously staid when compared with what goes on nearby in Britain and Holland and Germany. Just before the credits start rolling Johnny Griffin tells how, arriving in France fresh from America, he learnt for the first time how to relax. In a music as close to human experience as jazz needs to be, that could be counted a slightly worrying achievement. □

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WORK IN PROGRESS

Art à la carte

Naseem Khan

MERLIN DID QUITE WELL from it, but latter-day magicians seem less fortunate. There are around 1,800 worldwide, but only a handful can earn their living from it. That, at least, is if you take a 'magician' to be a member of the Magic Circle, but the principle is probably true more generally.

Or so I gathered at a magic meal to which Work in Progress was invited just before the new year. Magic Moment restaurant, situated at London's epicentre (opposite Hamleys and Libertys) and a mere year old, may insist, as it does, that it stands and falls by the quality of its food and service, but that is not the real reason for its fascination. Magic Moment is the only restaurant in Britain (at least, as far as this column knows) where, day in and day out, you get magic with your meal. You even have to contend with illusion before you get to the table.

Walk down the stairs from the street and panic could easily set in. First, you'll find yourself in an anteroom totally surrounded by picture-covered walls. Solve that one and you're in the bar — but then, to reach the restaurant itself, you'll have to pull the right book out of the bookshelf to move the dividing wall.

The restaurant, by comparison, is mild stuff. No rabbits leap out of hats with menus. The dishes are decent, middle-of-the-road, standard Americana (steaks, seafood, salads), nothing more magical than that. The two tough money-men who gave me lunch poured cold water on any conceits. 'If the food and service is not good you could have — believe me — elephants walking through the restaurant and it wouldn't do any good,' said Bill Wood, the North American yuppy co-owner. A chubby, clean-scrubbed young man with the offhand rudeness of the rather rich, he is partly responsible for the restaurant and its sister in Sarasota, Florida. Magic is, in both America and Britain, merely icing on the cake, agreed Graham Barrett, his British manager.

But it is undoubtedly magic that gives the restaurant its edge. After each meal is over, one of six full-time magicians moves in to provide a mini-display of personal, close-up magic. Engaging and bewildering as this all is for customers (and, round the restaurant, confident smiles faded as coins vanished, eggs materialised and other odd phenomena occurred), it's even better news for magicians.

Richard McDougill was on duty when I was there — a young, bony, rather startled-looking man — and he said feelingly that the place had done him nothing but good. The 15,000 tables at which he'd performed that year had kept his technique in trim. Contacts made had led to further jobs and kept him agreeably busy. It's all part of a mini-boom in close-up, table-top magic, he said; a boom sufficient to keep 15 magicians that McDougill knew, in London alone, in business. Part of the reason, he considered, was a shift in tastes and habits. It's now far more rare, for instance, for business dinners and conferences to hire straight, after-dinner magicians. They tend to go for quirkier stuff: for magicians who will pose as delegates and amaze their apparent colleagues with tricks in the bar. It is all good news for flexible magicians able to leave the podium (though less good for female magicians, but more of them another time). And, in that scenario, said McDougill, Magic Moment had played its part.

This mild form of business sponsorship of the arts is not unique. It can be found in another new venture, unglamorously sited in Waterloo Station's old gents lavatory. 'I must say, I do resent the way people concentrate on the lavatorial aspect,' said Kevin Greenan, co-owner with his wife Mary of Le Café de Piaf, the restaurant that's taken over the lavatory space. Nestling under the station and approached by a wonderfully grand staircase, the Piaf has not magicians but musicians — 25 of them — on its books.

They're a mixed bunch, beams Greenan: many classical music students eking out meagre grants (and some prize-winners like the winner of the 1982 Yehudi Menuhin Award for composition), some jazz musicians and, most importantly for the Piaf's character, anyone who can play or sing what Greenan calls 'French music' — Piaf, Aznavour, Brel and all that that suggests.

Since their designer friend died just before beginning the job, the Greenans intrepidly took it on themselves, laying the place out in three sections: the open-plan restaurant with its fake shutters, candles and baby grand; the bar area; a side part which contains a picture gallery named after the intended designer. It's vaguely dated — cream walls, dark wood, peach-coloured plush — but not enough to be schmaltzy.

It's a different kettle of fish from Magic Moment. While magic is the icing on the Regent Street restaurant, Greenan sees the music and the pictures as part of a total package. But then, he has come to the experience completely fresh, unmarked by any Florida experience. The £200,000 he has put in to convert the space hasn't come backed by any trust corporation. What he wants above all to create is a particular kind of ambiance, he says, his eyes gleaming behind thick specs as Neil Butler tinkles on the piano in the background.

As a form of business sponsorship of the arts, Le Café de Piaf has its place, as does the magic restaurant. They keep artists alive; they keep the arts in the public view. And Greenan's gallery, in its four months' life, has done rather well. Its last show, by Paul Davies, had to close early because it sold out and the new owners wanted their works before Christmas. Greenan takes no commission for sales and asks for no hanging fees. 'The treasures of the nation are living on the streets of London,' he said firmly. The Piaf is, as well as a business, his small gesture. □

Next week: Work in Progress listens to women's music.

THEATRE

From outer space

Victoria Radin

Heresies
DEBORAH LEVY *Pit*
A Penny for a Song
JOHN WHITING *Barbican*

IF THE PLAYS in the repertory of the Royal Shakespeare Company were labelled in terms of the gender of their directors, they would all of them be designated 'men's projects'. I mention this because the play I am about to discuss grew out of, and has been designated, 'the women's project' — conferring on half the population the special minority status of a group of visiting Martians.

That, anyway, is how many of the younger women actors at the RSC see, have seen and (unless a lot more is done than another 'women's project') will see their standing within the company. The National Theatre begins, by contrast, to look positively avant-garde.

About 18 months ago, some of the younger women actors at the RSC — Lindsay Duncan, Juliet Stevenson and Fiona Shaw among them — began meeting to work together and the idea of a specifically 'women's' piece was born. The group — whose individual components changed as new actors arrived in the company and others left — invited Susan Todd to direct. She had staged a play for the RSC Barbican Festival several years ago — which is not at all the same as directing a piece for the company repertory — and is a founder member of the feminist theatre group Monstrous Regiment. Todd brought in the young writer Deborah Levy: the result of all this is **Heresies**.

Before I attempt to describe this work, which was royally panned by the regular (male) national critics, it is useful to remind ourselves that self-consciousness never did anyone any good. The nose-thumbing and, at the same time, self-deflating names of groups like Monstrous Regiment (or Virago Books) make me wince. *Heresies* — again the title is a dare — has some of the excess self-awareness of the candidate who is finally allowed a speech at a big party conference.

In form it is non-linear, anti-naturalistic, using a mixture of heightened language, music and strong and unexpected visual effects in a process that, at its best, works by association: that is, it is an offshoot of the 'performance' piece. As Caryl Churchill and David Lan's *A Mouthful of Birds* is doing at the Royal Court, it breaks RSC taboos simply by its form.

The piece opens curiously with one woman scrubbing a floor and another treading grapes. The scrubber is revealed as Cholla (Caroline Goodall) whose programme subtitle is 'The Displaced Person': she is Hungarian, has a small daughter and, as we are eventually told, has left her husband 'The Architect' (Roger Allam) and is working as an office cleaner. The wine maker is Violet, a moralist who worries (as does Leah, the composer with whom she lives) about what our greed and nihilism will do to the next generation. This greed, or Yuppie quality, is represented by

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The Architect, a black-garbed, pony-tailed icon of chic, in the manner of Karl Lagerfield, who builds red-marbled banks in the City, and by the rather awfully-named Mayonnaise (Susan Tracy in a succession of spangled frocks) as 'The Courtesan', an embarrassingly willing accomplice of (and sufferer from) men's ideas of the rapports between the sexes.

The only other man in this piece of ten women is Mayonnaise's husband, a strange notion of an investment broker. There is Mayonnaise's mother (Miriam Karlin), who abandoned her daughter and now seems most preoccupied by her hair dye; a trio of sort of Weird Sisters who minister to female needs; and an Irish and devoutly Catholic housekeeper and her sister, an IRA activist.

The two sisters, disparate as they are, yield the single example of a strong affective bond in the play — and I think that this is one of its faults. But the biggest one is that the author seems to lose her nerve and, in the second half, spells out all the ideas and emotions that she had previously brought to life by hints. The ironic, stately, surrealist tone — something of Djuna Barnes and difficult to sustain — topples into one that looks dangerously like self-parody.

It is elegantly performed and directed; and the music of Ilona Sekacz (she, at least, is a regular at the RSC) is hauntingly beautiful. Iona McLeish's costumes (Cholla scrubs in a long, white, chiffon skirt and dance slippers) and her set (high-tech Joseph shops with a huge aquarium of dead fish) are rather too fashionably exquisite; but perhaps that is one of the heresies.

John Whiting's loving comedy of Englishness, **A Penny for a Song**, originally staged in 1951, is now revived by that consistently incisive and even sometimes too rugged director and chooser of plays (Edward Bond's, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*), Howard Davies. I find myself totally bewildered. A charmless group of bumbling Brits impersonate Napoleon or chase fires, but most of Whiting's love (and Davies') is focused on an achingly schmaltzy (and entirely ideological) love affair between a blinded soldier and a girl of 17 who is meant to personify pre-sexual innocence as she sits on the rather splendid tree designed by Bob Crowley and pulls up her skirt for us. Stephen Moore, Mick Ford, Brian Cox and Ian McNeice, the latter two playing Very Big, lend their services to an evening of stupefying inconsequentiality. □

TELEVISION

Cognitive rehearsals

Hugo Williams

AN ANAEMIC FRIEND of mine claims it's TV that is draining the colour from his face. He says the TV companies use our colouring to produce their own, pointing out that he used to feel perfectly okay watching his old black-and-white set, on which he was never that keen. Substitute the word 'energy' for 'colour' and you'll see how right he is. How else explain the feeling of sadness and hopelessness that overcomes one watching the box?

On **People Do The Funniest Things** (ITV), a round-up of foreign stuff hosted by Jeremy Beadle, an American man offered an American woman $50 to take off her tights in the street. The woman was embarrassed and reluctant but she probably knew she was on Candid Camera so she went along with the idea. The man put the tights on his head and the woman had to trim off the legs for him. I watched while this was going on. I didn't have to, but I watched. Why?

In *Humour, Where's The Joke?* on **Thinking Aloud** (BBC2) Jonathan Miller said that jokes were a necessary cognitive rehearsal for life. 'The more we laugh, the more we see the point of things, the better we are at life,' he said. Humour, according to Miller, reminds us of the categories into which we divide the world, reinforcing our ability to cope. Apply this thought to the above humorous incident with the tights and you'll see how lost we are among the categories we have created for ourselves, particularly over Christmas. It's as if, dumbfounded and pale with TV, we don't know any more that tights are for women's heads, not men's bottoms. As the tights fall down over the man's face, achieving the secretly-desired epiphany, the action freezes for the joke and a noise like a death rattle springs involuntarily from our throats.

Meanwhile our scientists of humour over on BBC2, among them the oh-so-politically fragrant Ben Elton, are all terrifically agreed that jokes aren't really funny at all, only situation humour is really funny, because situation humour, not jokes, is what Ben Elton does for a living. Jokes, it is agreed, are a male need and an inferior branch of comedy, to do with domination and colonialism. Men do not have the intuitive natural intimacy of women (or these men didn't): 'the common ground of affliction' which, one understood by implication, was a form of situation comedy, the higher stuff, thankfully denied to men, who understandably prefer jokes. Jokes are sexist, racist and elitist, but men need them because joke-telling among men is part of the pathos of being a man, locker-rooms and laughing at the misfortunes of others. Get the idea?

It's certainly part of the pathos of being Jeremy Beadle, the old *Game for a Laugh* man, who now has another practical-joke show called **Beadle's About** (ITV) in which very simple jokes indeed are not told, but illustrated, with actual people

BILLBOARD

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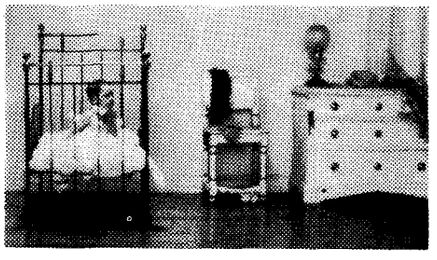
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unwittingly taking the place of the words, because words themselves aren't funny any more, or even comprehensible to a Beadle adherent. Sample jokes are peoples' cars, which aren't really their cars, being destroyed before their eyes, or someone being tricked into being handcuffed, then left. This is certainly a cognitive rehearsal for life, but is it amusing? I'd need to go into therapy with Dr Miller before my mouth learnt to twitch watching this stuff.

'Don't go away,' pleads Beadle at the commercial break. 'In a few minutes you'll see one of the funniest jokes we've ever played . . .' But Jeremy, I want to go away so badly! I want to go away forever and never come back. I want to roar with laughter at myself sitting on the lavatory reading the *TV Times* and there's no lavatory paper! I know Keith Stewart, your 'creative consultant' would understand as well as anyone what I'm going to have to use instead.

It's all a far cry from good old *Candid Camera* (UK variety) in which the twisted and melancholy subconscious of Jonathan Routh was allowed to mingle with the world. **The Second Worst of Alright** (sic) **on the Night** (ITV) was the same sort of thing as *Beadle's About*, except by accident. Someone gets cramp playing a love-scene; a long jumper trips up; the bits fall off a weatherman's chart; a woman's tits pop out in *Come On Down*. Then it's all swept up off the floor, stuck together rather well and shoved out at peak viewing time on hangover night. Ha-ha! It's all supposed to be very British. 'When it comes to a cock-up, we lead the world,' says Denis Norden smugly. Most of the time you can see the participants have twigged an alternative market for their foul-ups and are milking it for all they are worth.

Anyone switching on in the middle of **Clive James on Television** (ITV) — Or was it **Clive James on Safari** (C4)? — may have wondered why a white man, blindfold, was down on his knees running his hands over the perfectly-formed, g-string clad bottom of a black woman while Nigerian singer Sade gargled in the background. I wondered, anyway. The answer was that he was trying to identify the bottom of his girlfriend from the bottoms of three other woman in a game show on French TV and was, seemingly, in no hurry to do so. Asked what sort of men she liked best, a woman on America's *Dream Date Phone-In* said she preferred men with 'powerful contracting testicles', which I've been worrying about ever since.

On Sunday night I found the answer to all these problems of mine. Three middle-aged couples appearing on **Bullseye** (ITV), a quiz-show obscurely hinged to darts, were shown a photo of Jonathan Miller and asked to say who it was, for £500. Miller pouted amusedly at the world for several seconds, but no one had the faintest idea as to who he might be. □

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ARTS LINE
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01-388 2227/8

Partners in struggle from *Handsworth Songs*

CINEMA

To haunt us

Judith Williamson

Handsworth Songs
An East End Story
Metro

AS 1986 CLOSES our national film critics look back on British Film Year and discuss the problems of Goldcrest, the failure of *Revolution*. As 1987 opens their eyes are turned to the major international releases, with Tarkovsky's death drawing added attention to *The Sacrifice*, and a new Coppola movie (amongst others) opening the same week.

Meanwhile, new steps in British film production, distribution and exhibition continue — the product not of a Year but a decade's work setting up the structures that allow independent, low-budget films to be made (the ACTT agreement outlined here recently) and — just as important — to be seen. After years of agitation for a central London exhibition venue by the Independent Film-Makers' Association, the Metro cinema was started a year ago by independent distributors The Other Cinema, with funding from the GLC's Arts and Recreation Committee. Its opening of *The Passion of Remembrance* last month marked the first ever West End run of a film from a black workshop. Now, hard on its heels, comes the release of Black Audio Film Collective's *Handsworth Songs*, running with Suj Ahmend's *An East End Story*.

Much of the so-called British film revival has hinged on pictures about our colonial past; now, one of the most vital strands of British film culture both arises from and addresses that same past (and its legacy in the present) from the other side. This movement owes something to the development of cultural theories which are changing the lines of debate about ideology, race and class: both *Passion of Remembrance* and *Handsworth Songs* pay tribute in their credits to Stuart Hall, a human landmark on the field of cultural studies in which the political language of both films has taken shape.

'There are no stories in the riots, only the ghosts of other stories.' This line from the extraordinarily poetic script of **Handsworth Songs** is at the heart not only of the film's meaning, but of its structure; or rather — and this is true of all successful films — the two are inseparable. Described by its makers as a 'film essay', *Handsworth Songs* is a montage of images, sounds and words that simultaneously explore the surface of the 'civil disorder' in Handsworth and South London as presented through the media, while raising the ghosts, the histories political and personal, that hover behind that surface. Yet the film makes no simple distinction between the 'superficial' and the 'real'; its images are very much felt as such — from archive footage of colonial labour to the TV picture of Thatcher's 'alien customs' speech — and on one level it is *about* the images it's made of, at once impenetrable and resonant. The familiar shots of burning cars, the giant headlines, newsphotos of 'looters' on the run — jostling those pictures of urban debris are the ghosts of other *images*, Fifties newsreel of Caribbean immigrants waving from the decks of ships, families with suitcases and the promise of work, images of hope and expectation whose very existence as old news gives them an added sense of lost innocence.

It is in the tension between image and story that the film really pushes the boundaries of documentary. Though none of the material is simple, the contemporary sequences take recognisable forms as interviewees speak, politicians argue. But with the 'ghost stories' the film makers have taken a risk, shifting to intimate,

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individual narratives, feelings, recollections — 'that night I moved from an idea to a possibility' — so that the voice-overs provide an interiority which contrasts poignantly with the documentary footage of the time. And after the endless imagery of black 'violence' — always rioting, always running — different pictures: wedding photos, dances, the lifetime of dreams and desires whose shattering lies behind those unrevealing shots of fire and rubble. The risk taken with this unusual and beautifully written script pays off, for by creating these interiors, clearing room among the images as it were for some of the quiet passion and pain of the past, childhood memories, uncertain identities, a space is created for the viewer, one which also makes possible a kind of echo as meanings reverberate across and between the images.

This is the film's great achievement: it manages to produce a sense of what it is about, not just by telling but by doing it. The film is accessible — but not didactic; there is room to breathe. The opening image of the black, uniformed museum attendant surrounded by giant wheels of machinery, with the ominous gong-like knell of the sound track, has a meaning that can't be defined verbally but can be sensed by anybody; as birds gather on twilight telephone wires, a mechanical clown in a shop window turns his head and stares unseeing from side to side — who needs to be told what these images mean? They work in their own right, along with the brilliant sound track which plays a crucial part in distancing the familiar, referencing the past (for example in a version of 'Jerusalem') and creating literal echoes to match those of the pictures. It is no coincidence that Black Audio come to this — their first film project — from making tape-slide work, for they are strikingly skilled in overlapping sound and images both new and 're-used'. And, as Eisenstein pointed out, in the process of montage something new is created: this is both an analogy and a part of the process they describe, 'by which the living transform the dead into partners in struggle'.

An East End Story also uses the combination of sound and image very cleverly, turning the half-hour story of Asian self-defence in the face of racial attacks into a mini-thriller. Deftly made on an extraordinarily low budget (£2,500) by two recent graduates of Harrow College, the film is structured — as in the classic detective genre — as a series of flashbacks; which lead towards answering not *who*dunnit, but *why*.

TRAILERS

Black British Film-Making 1963-1986 — a season which gives the background to this week's films — starts at the Ritzy, Brixton, on 11 Jan. Programmes and details from 01-737 2121.

The ideologically fascinating new Chinese film, *Sacrifice of Youth*, shows at the Hyde Park Picture House, Leeds, on 15 Jan, opening a season of women's films run by Leeds Animation workshop. Further details on 0532-484997.

The Stirling Film Festival starts its second year on 11 Jan with the theme 'Great Screen Performances': details from 0786-61081.

Martin Scorsese visits the UK this month and Filmhouse Edinburgh is running a season of films that have influenced him, alongside his own work. Details from 031-228 2688.

Books

TRANSLATION

An insular position

Martin Chalmers

New political and cultural ideas aren't exclusive to Bloomsbury — or Manhattan — but you'd scarcely guess it from a glance at the British publishing and reviewing scenes

MORE THAN TWENTY years ago, Cyril Connolly, then literary editor of the *Sunday Times*, listed 'one hundred key books' of the Modern Movement in the paper's review section. (The titles were also presented in a book called, simply, *The Modern Movement*, just re-published by Allison & Busby at £8.95 & £3.95). Forty of the books on the list were by British authors, including such innovative modernists as Thomas Hardy, Lytton Strachey, Somerset Maugham and John Betjeman. French was the only non-English-speaking culture represented, a sign more of gentlemanly, or class, accomplishment than of anything else. Connolly argued that 'the inclusion of Russian and German books would make the list far too long'.

It is easy to smile now at Connolly's judgment and style ('The French fathered the Modern Movement . . .'); it's an example of what Perry Anderson, at about the same time, condemned as 'a wretched cultural provincialism'. Yet, despite the New Left's critique, despite the internationalism of the Sixties and Seventies and the attempts to open British culture to intellectual debates in Europe and elsewhere, the changes have not been as profound as might have been expected.

One index of this is the translation of literature and other texts into English. There is a sense of self-congratulation about the position of English as the world-language of science, business and pop. However, in Europe, it is French and German which have reasserted themselves as the languages of translation, as intersections of literary and intellectual culture from Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, Iberia and beyond to the Near East. Even if the number of books translated from English and American English is subtracted, France and West Germany are both translating three times as many titles as Britain every year. The disproportion is even greater in philosophy, arts and literature.

In cultural terms, the benefits of English as world language are bought at the cost of an orientation towards, even an embrace of, America. Britain is a channel, a servicing point for American products.

British literary and intellectual life and, particularly, left culture suffer as a result. European work or insights on common developments or problems are unknown or only partially perceived. The discussion around post-modernism in Britain has been symptomatic. The 'old' New Left, as represented by *New Left Review* and, recently, Richard Gott in the *Guardian*, have adopted the position of stoning the bearers of the bad postmodernist tidings. It is as if they believe that by knocking out of debate those thinkers and writers who are attempting to analyse the changed conditions of our societies they will be able to wind the clock back to a situation more comprehensible to left orthodoxies.

I don't wish, here, to go into the reasons for this rather pathetic display. I want rather to look at some of the most important barriers to a greater awareness of foreign literatures and intellectual contexts.

One quite obvious but important factor is the paucity of space allotted to reviews and reviewing in the British press. Partly due to an unusual degree of concentration, there are relatively few papers which review to any degree at all. The book review pages of the dailies and weeklies appear to be thrown together without any perspective except to deal with the books which happen to have appeared in any particular week. But why are books only reviewed, if at all, as soon as they are published? Why, indeed, are there only reviews, with overviews or more considered articles, situating books and developments, almost entirely absent? Is it possible to do justice to a new novel, perhaps by a previously unpublished foreign author, in less than 100 words? Frequently, anyway, the translation — or, worse, the re-print of a translation unavailable for 20 or 30 years — goes entirely unmentioned (and unsold) irrespective of any aesthetic or political criteria.

Literary movements, political and cultural constellations, rarely get any attention in the British book review pages. Consequently, there's little which provides the surprises and *new* information which the reader can find in *Le Monde* or *Die Zeit*, for example. The *Guardian*'s attempt to tackle postmodernism largely proved that its critics weren't equal to the task. A most revealing insight into the attitude of the liberal press to literature and ideas was provided by the *Observer* a few weeks ago. On the front page of the review section, above the critics' books of the year, was a drawing of a kind of Fifties utopia: a man, sitting in an easy chair, in front of a fire, smoking a pipe and reading a book. Presumably he's enjoying a 'good book' after Christmas dinner, while the female relations wash the dishes.

A look at the other parts of the media landscape produces similar conclusions. To put it bluntly: it would be impossible, on the basis of what is published in English newspapers, magazines and journals, to have any sense, or form any judgment, of literature or intellectual and political debates in other European countries.

This situation inevitably contributes to the lack of interest of London publishers in translation. As there is no extensive discussion in British publications of literature elsewhere, there is no reason to expect publishers to be more knowledgeable or well informed than anyone else. Consequently, the information that counts in taking over a foreign book is sales figures, not the establishment of a programme.

An exacerbating factor is the existence — caused by management and marketing needs — of decisive distinctions between book categories:

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divisions which are already unusually sharp in English literary culture. A few months ago, I suggested to a major publisher a translation of a recent book by one of Europe's leading cultural and political essayists. Now, of course, it's quite reasonable for a publisher to have grounds for rejecting any proposal, but, in this case, the reason given was that it was 'fringe'. This meant that it was neither a) an academic text book, b) fiction, c) a hobby book.

A considerable body of recent European ideas and writing falls into this hole signposted 'fringe' — and the position is even worse for that labelled 'non-fiction' than that labelled 'fiction' (though these labels themselves are increasingly inadequate to cope with the variety of fusions of different kinds of texts).

Ironically, the state of our knowledge would be even worse without the intermittent supply of American and Australian journals which reaches a couple of London bookshops. By a circuitous route of many thousands of miles they let the curious and the unsatisfied know at least something of what's happening a few hundred miles across the Channel. But do we share the same concerns as these other 'translators'? Is a more direct dialogue or intervention not possible?

Thought must be given to how translation can be developed. I mean this both in the narrow sense of translating texts and in the wider one of making national cultures, particularly oppositional cultures, and debates more widely known and available. As in other areas, the particular forms of media concentration in Britain, with their dependence and orientation towards the United States, are blocking factors which cannot be underestimated. In the Eighties radical cultural politics have foregrounded the heterogeneity of our society, focussing on specific audiences and communities. But general and generalising debate are equally indispensable.

The Labour Party, with its apex in that peculiar men's club, the House of Commons, will be difficult to convince. The non-culture of Neil Kinnock is as depressingly representative of it as that of Geoffrey Howe: men who have a kind of hole, an emptiness, where others have passion for novels, music or films. The political class has abandoned literacy. If the wider left were to do so, it would utterly disarm any potential oppositional culture or politics.

ART

Addicts only

John Spurling

I KNOW ONLY ONE person who regularly buys art books and I don't know whether he reads the text or only pores over the illustrations. Art book texts, after all, tend to be fairly tough going, demanding time, concentration and a lot of exhausting eye-movement, finger-work and mental adjustment between word and image. Yet it is perhaps the effort involved in studying them thoroughly that makes the best art books so addictive.

Literary and music criticism are quite different, since you can't experience even a novel or a symphony, let alone a whole oeuvre, at the same time as the discussion of it, whereas with modern colour illustrations and art criticism you almost can. Of course, reproductions on a page are neither the right size nor texture and hardly ever quite the right colour, but if you haven't got the ready £7.7m for an actual Manet over your fireplace, they're a very decent and comparatively cheap substitute.

Monet's 'Poppy Field near Giverny' (1985)

Which said, you would have to be an addict or a person of some means to afford any of these four books on the Impressionists. The best value is John House's **Monet** (Yale, £19.95). Some of its illustrations, printed in Italy, are so sumptuous that they take your breath away as you turn the page. All the Impressionists specialised in glorifying the ordinary, but Monet's motifs sometimes seem more ordinary than anyone else's and more astonishingly transformed by his treatment. The double page of part of 'The Banks of the Seine near Vetheuil' shows nothing but a stretch of water in blue and white slashes of paint, framed behind by a irregular line of blue or green vertical splodges (trees against the sky) and in front by a dense screen of small yellow, green and white brush-strokes (long grass and wild flowers). Another full-page detail from 'A Bend in the River Epte' is even more spectacular: a mass of green and yellow blobs, pierced here and there with patches of blue, sweeping down from left to right. The motif is the spring foliage of a row of poplars, but the subject is sunlight, described so rapturously that it becomes a kind of pagan celebration with distinctly sexual overtones, a modern version of Danae's shower of gold.

Indeed it is an *impression* such paintings (and even their reproductions) convey: an impression of ease, naturalness, rapidity, ecstasy. 'I would like to paint as the bird sings,' Monet is said to have said. John House, however, is concerned to demonstrate how deceptive such statements about Impressionism can be, suggesting both the pretty insouciance for which they are so popular today and the careless sketchiness which once seemed so offensive to traditionalists in their own day, but concealing the artifice, persistent labour and radically innovatory perception that revolutionised painting within a generation. House does not unfortunately write as the bird sings, but if you stick with him and pay the same close attention to the subject as he has you will find yourself almost at Monet's elbow, examining not only his career and his choice of subjects in the usual manner of such books but also his priming, his underlay, his brushwork, corrections, colour, *plein-airisme* (not always as *plein-air* as he liked to make out) in fine detail. So, in the end, you emerge rather as you might from a course in aeronautical engineering, equally astonished by the beauty and efficiency of the flying machine and by the trial-and-error intricacy of the technical adjustments necessary to get it into the air.

Manet was a less ethereal artist as well as more dependent on traditional art — perhaps because he didn't live long enough to part company with it quite as radically as Monet. Manet worked his magic somewhat in the style of Cinderella's fairy godmother, turning the pumpkin into a coach by lending the boulevard life of Paris and contemporary historical events (such as a battle between American Civil War frigates or the execution of the Emperor Maximilian) the pictorial grandeur that had once been reserved, in the hands of Renaissance masters, for kings and courtiers and subjects from mythology or ancient history. Kathleen Adler's **Manet** (Phaidon,

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£39.50) is a readable, fairly standard account of his life and work which stresses the enigmatic subversiveness of his art at the same time as his contradictory desire for recognition and acceptance by the authorities. There are good full-page colour illustrations of what one might call his chamber dramas — 'Lunch in the Studio', 'Chez le Père Lathuille', etc. — but, considering the book's price, the large, crowded scenes — the 'Execution', 'The Universal Exhibition', 'The Masked Ball at the Opera' and 'La Musique aux Tuileries' — are meanly and inadequately reproduced.

John Rewald's **Cézanne** (Thames and Hudson, £40) was first published in 1936 with the title *Cézanne et Zola*. An expanded edition with a slightly different title was published in 1939 and this much praised and unobtainable work has now been expanded and reshaped afresh. It is essentially a biography, but Rewald's encyclopaedic knowledge of the Impressionists, the fact that he is as much a storyteller as an academic and the strange character of his subject would make it desirable enough even without the illustrations.

These include Rewald's own photographs of many of Cézanne's motifs, taken when the buildings and countryside were still substantially unaltered from Cézanne's own day, as well as new colour reproductions of the paintings which would have been inconceivable when the book was first published. The successive pages and open-out spreads of still-lifes, landscapes and of the dark and disturbing early figure-paintings clinch the matter. If nobody gave the addict this book for Christmas, he/she will have to go out and buy it now.

The Impressionist Revolution, edited by Bruce Bernard (Orbis, £25), contains succinct, mainly biographical essays by various hands on the Magnificent Seven: Monet, Manet and Cézanne, plus Degas, Pissarro, Renoir and Sisley. The illustrations are variable, some very good, some distinctly sub-standard, but there are plenty of them. This is not, I should guess, a book for addicts, though it seems too expensive for the more casual market at which it must be aimed. □

POETRY

Intimacies

Michèle Roberts

Beautiful Barbarians: Lesbian Feminist Poetry
ed. LILIAN MOHIN *Onlywomen* £3.95

CRITICS APPLYING solely a masculine attitude towards what constitutes good poetry have often been unable to read female/feminist texts in a fruitful and illuminating way, have often missed what is being said. A language problem. My difficulty in reviewing this book doesn't come only from diffidence about my capacity properly to appreciate lesbian aesthetics (perhaps my bisexual history helps): one problem resides in the packaging of the book itself.

The contents are labelled *lesbian feminist*, yet noticeably include another sort of Otherness (from a WASP's point of view) transformed into subjecthood: the poets are openly Canadian, Black British, American, Australian, Indian, Irish, drawing on a wide range of social and religious backgrounds and sometimes (by no means always) writing specifically out of these various wordhoards in order to invent the next line of the poem.

Although I know that lesbians are made to feel foreigners in their own countries, doesn't the old bottle *lesbian/feminist* explode under the impact of all this difference, this new wine? No doubt the l/f flag will be a signal to many readers who don't normally bother with male establishment poets and who will derive great enjoyment and support for their lives from this book. But non-lesbians should read it too, if initially only to ponder what *is* a lesbian poem and can only a lesbian write it.

A second problem concerns the status of the poet, the social position from which s/he speaks. If many (not all) male poets have chosen to speak *publicly* as 'priests' to the listening people, not noticing how often they have ignored, misrepresented and offended women in the audience, the language of many of the poems in this book suggests a *private* space ('closet' in the 18th-century sense of where you can chat intimately with friends, write your journal and letters), a private audience of sympathisers; the book less as printed commodity that circulates between buyers then as handwritten text passed around after supper.

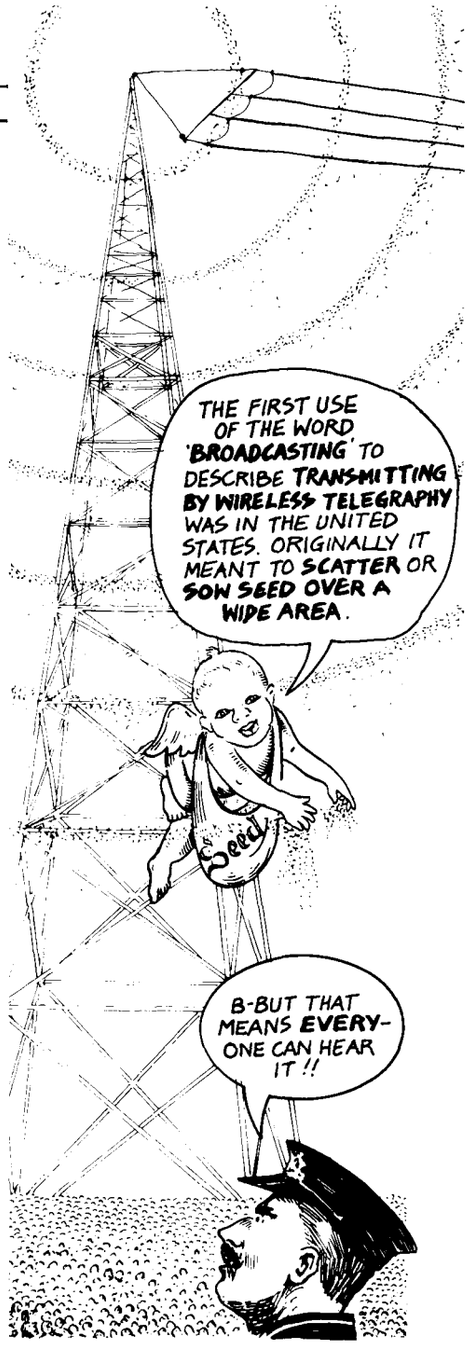
Many poems are addressed to a specific 'you' (friend, lover, daughter, sister, mother) and exploit the rhythms and simplicities, the shorthands and clichés of conversation, without searching for symbols that reach beyond the closed circle of the couple.

While this doesn't necessarily make for 'bad' writing (just a different sort of writing) it puts the reader, if s/he's not already a member of the intimate group, in the position of eavesdropper or voyeur. Though what we see/hear is rarely explicitly erotic; these are mainly poems of identity, of speculation about what it means to be a woman-centred woman in a world hostile to that way of being.

As Jackie Kay puts it: 'I saw ugly and blue and lonely/and not being able to get/the Real Thing.' Or as J. P. Hollerith insists: 'We on the margins/We slant-written against the text of the world/. . . We annotate, we say:/The text is not all there is.'

Not all these poems gave me the fizz down the spine that Tsvetayeva distinguished as the response called up by real poetry. The work I found the most satisfying was that which boldly subverts a language of symbols common to a wider culture. Sheila Shulman (perhaps because she is training to be a rabbi) lets herself use the images of Judaism to sing powerfully, to mourn and curse and celebrate. Gillian Hanscombe and Suniti Namjoshi crack wonderful jokes about the Eng.Lit. and romantic traditions they grew up with. In her two found poems, Andrea Freud Loewenstein demonstrates how simple self-expression is not enough; *translation* is what matters. □

Michèle Roberts' most recent collection of poems is The Mirror of the Mother *(Methuen).*


THE FIRST USE OF THE WORD 'BROADCASTING' TO DESCRIBE TRANSMITTING BY WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY WAS IN THE UNITED STATES. ORIGINALLY IT MEANT TO SCATTER OR SOW SEED OVER A WIDE AREA.
B-BUT THAT MEANS EVERY-ONE CAN HEAR IT !!

There's a lot of weak drawing in MEDIA & POWER: FROM MARCONI TO MURDOCH (a Camden Press Graphic Guide, £4.95) but that soon gets lost among the book's other visual fireworks. Faithful to the aesthetics of the original Beginners Books, designer and illustrator Corinne Pearlman bombards the shape of Peter Lewis' text with collages, reproduced photographs and ads, newspaper cuttings, comic strips, exploding the demarcation line between narrative and illustration. And Lewis' text gives as good as it gets. With erudition, intelligence and wit, it illuminates for even the most obtuse and/or uninformed reader the history, science, technology and politics of broadcasting (though *not*, whatever the title might imply, of all communications media). The interdependence of broadcasting growth and military/imperialist ambition; the tug of power between states, people and commerce for control of the airwaves; pirate radio; satellite TV: it's all, quite painlessly and seamlessly, here. (Harriett Gilbert)

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HISTORY

Devil's island

David Gilmour

A History of Sicily
M. I. FINLEY, D. MACK SMITH & C. J. H. DUGGAN
Chatto £14.95

SINCE THE ORIGINAL volumes of this history went out of print, anyone in search of a book on Sicily has had a restricted choice. There have been a number of works on the Mafia, two or three on the Middle Ages and several curious books that could best be placed under the heading 'Sicily without Sicilians', modern travelogues that still treat the island as a classical paradise peopled by Daedalus and Aphrodite. This new edition of the *History of Sicily*, abridged and brought up to date by Christopher Duggan, thus achieves a double purpose: it fills a massive void in the bookshop shelves and it restores to print the Sicilian work of two of Britain's finest postwar historians, Denis Mack Smith and the late Sir Moses Finley.

The first edition was a vast undertaking, forcing both historians to venture 1,000 years outside their main periods in order to tackle the three millenia of Sicilian history. The result showed clearly that the past was not simply the story of 14 different powers imposing diverse cultures and regimes on the island. Its history proved full of recurrent themes, of unexpected continuity and patterns of behaviour repeated down the centuries. One unfortunate example of the *déjà vu* side of this history was the tendency of squabbling factions to appeal for help to outsiders who subsequently invaded and conquered the island.

Sicily attracted foreign invasions partly because it was too small to remain independent and partly because its soil was once irresistibly fertile for Mediterranean predators. The island was perhaps unlucky with its foreign rulers — Roman emperors, Spanish kings and Italian prime ministers of the last century were equally reluctant to visit it — but it was even unluckier with its own ruling classes. Mack Smith's descriptions of the Sicilian barons and their centuries of indolence, selfishness and vanity make one wonder whether a more useless set of people has ever existed. Persistently refusing to contribute their share of the tax burden, they were prepared to give money to their Spanish rulers only in return for more and more titles. This led to an absurd and quite undeserved proliferation of the aristocratic class. As Lord Melbourne said about the Garter, there was 'no damned merit' about becoming a Sicilian prince.

This edition contains an excellent new chapter by Christopher Duggan on the island's recent history. The pessimism of the earlier volumes seems to have been justified by Sicily's post-war performance. In spite of rising living standards, the record is a more or less disastrous one of industrial failure, agricultural neglect and misgovernment by a political bureaucracy whose chief characteristics appear to be lethargy and corruption. Dr Duggan's most original material deals with the Mafia and, in examining Prefect Mori's campaign against it in the Twenties, he deflates one of the few fascist achievements not previously punctured by Mack Smith. He also questions the traditional interpretation of the Mafia as a single organisation and thus comes close to the long-held Sicilian claim that northern Italians have elevated the island's criminal gangs into a vast monster with far-reaching but disciplined tentacles. This is obviously a controversial view, and one that even some Sicilians, such as the writer Sciascia, would dispute.

Yet perhaps in the end it makes little difference whether the Mafia exists or not. Because the *mafiosi* and their crimes go on, their violence and corruption a product of the island's unlucky history, descendants of centuries of ignorance and neglect and of a long series of natural and man-made disasters. The chief merit of this fine history is that it explains why Sicily has turned out so badly. □

FICTION

Boxes in boxes

Richard Deveson

In the Labyrinth
JOHN DAVID MORLEY *Deutsch* £8.95
Flight of Ashes
MONIKA MARON trans. DAVID NEWTON
MARINELLI *Readers International* £8.95 & £4.95

IN THE LABYRINTH is a better title than John David Morley seems to have intended. The book purports to be the true account, told by the victim, of the wrongful imprisonment of a man here called Joseph Pallehner. Pallehner has been a successful businessman in Czechoslovakia before the war and the labyrinth he enters is the barbaric world (powerfully described) of Czech gaols after the Communist coup. But the labyrinth the *reader* enters is one of supplementary questions. Has Pallehner really been wrongly imprisoned for collaboration? Has he forgotten parts of his own story? Is he telling the whole truth? Is he telling nothing but the truth? Why has Morley chosen to present Pallehner's story as a fragment of autobiography dressed up with the devices of fiction? We have nothing to go on other than Pallehner-as-told-to-Morley, and none of these questions is answered.

One must allow for one's prejudices. It's a delicate matter to be asked to sympathise with the plight of a Hungarian-German from Bratislava who gets rich by supplying building materials for the Third Reich, who boycotts Jewish colleagues, who professes to see nothing more in Nazism than a vigorous form of German nationalism and who never wavers till the end in his belief that Germany will, must, win. The charges against Pallehner may well have been phoney. The trouble is that he makes himself sound less innocent than he may actually have been. Instead of winning us on to Pallehner's side by giving us a ghosted 'true' inside story, Morley makes us even more suspicious about the bits that his ghostly informant may have suppressed.

Monika Maron's **Flight of Ashes** is another tour through a double Iron-Curtain maze. Josefa, her heroine, is a journalist in East Berlin who courts trouble by trying to publish a story on pollution and industrial disease. Needless to say, trouble responds to her advances. Josefa tortuously discovers that the Party won't forgive her for being a messenger even while it's prepared to listen to her message. But the book is most interesting, again, for a second-order mystery: namely, how Monika Maron *has* got it published. Unlike Josefa, she still works as a journalist in East Berlin, even though the novel came out in West Germany back in 1981. Perhaps the most curious fact about Josefa is that she never — unlike any real citizens of the DDR one actually meets — refers to, or shows any apparent interest in, the West. Is it possible that, through one of those never-to-be-divulged East-West arrangements, Maron was allowed to publish her book in the decent remoteness of Frankfurt provided that she refrained from attacking East German industrial backwardness with a weapon that would really hurt? □

BIOGRAPHY

Noh future

Paul Binding

Mishima: A Vision of the Void
MARGUERITE YOURCENAR trans. ALBERTO MANGUEL *Aidan Ellis* £9.50

IN OUR CONTEMPORARY pantheon of admired artists stand three who died violent deaths, deaths which they seem to have presaged in their works: Lorca, Pasolini, Mishima. There are remarkable similarities between them. All reacted vehemently against the brutalising materialism of their times, opposing to it more ancient, atavistic attitudes to life. All were men of limitless-seeming creativity which flowed into a diversity of art forms, yet are characterised by an intensely personal poetic 'grammar of images'.

All three, moreover, were homosexual and their deaths, no less than their lives and productions, cannot be divorced from this (though Mishima married and had two children). Lorca's sexual orientation may have played a part in his arrest, Pasolini was murdered by one of his *ragazzi di vita* and Mishima was having an affair with the handsome young Morita with whom he committed *seppuku* on 25 November 1970, endowing the act with some of the nature of a *liebestod*.

There are significant differences, however, between Mishima and the other two. Lorca and Pasolini were murdered, Mishima committed suicide according to a prescribed rite. And, while Lorca and Pasolini were of the left, Mishima was of the right, the extreme right at that. Yet even here distances can contract. Lorca's last visit to Granada and Pasolini's choice of pick-up, these can be viewed as courtships of death, while Mishima can legitimately be thought of as a spiritually questing artist who was murdered by a society emptily dedicated to productivity and

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profit.

As for the political differences, the hatreds that animated Mishima animated the Japanese left too. This he acknowledged after a public debate with Communist students: 'We are friends between whom there is a barbed-wire fence. We smile at one another but we can't kiss . . . What the [students] and I stand for is almost identical. We have the same cards on the table, but I have a joker — the Emperor.' And 'Long live the Emperor' was to be his dying cry.

It is always fascinating when a major creative writer applies him/herself to another: Gide on Dostoyevsky, Sartre on Genet, Graham Greene on Henry James and Marguerite Yourcenar herself on Cavafy (in *The Dark Brain of Piranesi*). In some ways her book on Mishima is an even more extraordinary achievement than those cited, because she extends her empathy out from the works, beyond what we can know of personality from the persona, to the strange and sensational event with which Mishima chose to end his life. Her study focuses on Mishima's last and masterwork, the tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility*, seeking out in it those elements which make the *seppuku* not only more comprehensible but also perhaps philosophically and psychologically inevitable. Thus Yourcenar's book in no way competes with others like Henry Scott Stokes' absorbing if journalistic *Life and Death of Yukio Mishima*.

Yourcenar explores the concept of Nothing, of the Void that stands behind *The Sea of Fertility* and to which its central character Honda stands at last in relation, the only alternative to the fret and decay inherent in our daily life. She shows how much that shocks us in Mishima, and in the older Japanese culture he looked to, is in fact a part of existence which we conventional humanists prefer to ignore. She quotes from a samurai treatise that meant much to Mishima: 'Work each morning to calm your spirit, and imagine the moment in which you wll be cut to pieces or mutilated by arrows, fire, spears and sabres, carried away by enormous waves, cast into the flames . . . or dying of an illness or during an unforeseen event.' Mishima did not die in an unforeseen event, of course, but in one he had meticulously planned; nevertheless both in his writings and in elaborate photographed rituals he had made the anticipations exhorted here.

Yourcenar's is a brilliant book, that of a rare and poetically articulate creative spirit. Her account of Mishima's death is at once horrifying and moving, worthy of comparison with the great scenes in her own novels (and in Mishima's). Nevertheless I find it a disquieting production. A challenge to smug evasive liberalism it may be, yet it is also more of an apologia than the author overtly declares.

Writing of a mass *seppuku* in 1877, of which she gives us horrible details, Yourcenar says: '. . . this incredible cascade of blood and entrails horrifies and at the same time excites like any spectacle of total courage.' I can discover no excitement in myself, and the courage seems to me terribly misplaced. Many of us indeed die in painful and frightening ways, and this has to be accepted as the aspect of the natural condition that it is — but not sought after, lingered upon to the exclusion of other aspects, compounded. Yourcenar has permitted herself too much of Mishima's own contempt for crass contemporary life and too little perspective upon those who have rejected it for ultimately narcissistic violence.

Apparently on his way to the Army Barracks and suicide, Mishima drove by the school where his 11-year-old daughter was studying. 'This is the moment,' he joked to his companions, 'when in a film we would hear some sentimental music.' Yourcenar opines that this jest hid what ran deep. Maybe, but the fact remains that his little girl (life, humanity) lost and the erotic embrace of bloody death won, and no amount of talk of Japan's sell-out to the USA, etc, can reconcile me to this. When one turns to *The Sea of Fertility* — the last volume of which was delivered to the publishers on the day of Mishima's suicide — strangely it is the tenderness of the delineation of character and relationships that most impresses. He was, after all, no unworthy fellow of Lorca and Pasolini, and that makes me, for one, bemoan rather than salute the nature of his tragic end. □

Stirring times in 1963

Lachlan Mackinnon

I was put into Grade 2D. For half an hour
after lunch we'd to put our heads down on our arms
and rest at our desks. We were supervised
by a senior, usually a girl, who kept us silent.
Seven years old, we couldn't see the point of this
so we liked Tessa best, who'd let us talk.
She was taken off duty. That day, when we crocodiled
from the lower to the upper school where the dining-hall was
for lunch, we had heard the news. We demonstrated
with shouts of 'We want Tessa! We want Tessa!'
People hung out of windows goggling
at the unheard-of din that went unpunished.
That was the spirit of the times.
Five years later the black riots came within blocks
of the comfy clapboard house we had rented that year,
my parents' friends wrote with some disbelief.
I'd been brought back to England to be struck
by a car and learn twenty years on
that what had dimmed half my twenties
was that and other accidents
— not, as I'd hoped, my generation's restlessness.

FICTION

Rover's return

Michelene Wandor

Oroonoko and Other Stories
APHRA BEHN *Methuen* £9.95 & £3.95

IN A SMALL WAY, the 17th-century writer Aphra Behn is enjoying a revival as a playwright. Over the past few years *The Rover* and *The Lucky Chance* have been given a metropolitan airing. This reissue of her short novel, *Oroonoko*, is accompanied by some short stories and shows her to be a more sophisticated prose fiction writer than she was a dramatist. It was from the latter activity, however, that she earned her living, giving her the probably symbolic title of 'first professional woman writer' in England. It is possibly also to the theatre that she owes some of her sense of incident-packed structure.

The title tale zips along at a wonderful pace: set in the West Indies, it has a romantic black hero whose true love, the virgin Imoinda, is grabbed by his grandfather for his *droit de seigneur*. The old man's inability to perform luckily keeps said Imoinda a virgin until the dashing Oroonoko can get her alone and perform the deed. He is then captured and sold into slavery where, such is his innate aristocracy, he is given his own house and land. However, the brutalities of colonialism ensure that he is not allowed to live happily ever after. He organises a slave uprising and, finally, dies, a martyr to the chivalrous principles of love and honour as witnessed by the sympathetic British Tory eye of Aphra Behn.

Despite more than a hint of patronage for the noble savage, the book still reads impressively today. There is an event in almost every sentence, but the real pleasure is in the zest and sheer eroticism of the language. Behn's forthright, sensual prose ducks and weaves a spell round the reader, as much because it still teases at so many Western taboos; the dividing line between love and lust, the erotic attraction of the 'other' — racial, sexual. In the other stories nymphomaniac nuns tryst with princes and chastity vies with passion. Behn is also no moralist, adding to the sense of exhilaration. Such writing verges on pornography in the best possible taste. If only Mills and Boon could aspire to this . . . . □

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Flip side

Barbara Taylor, London N5
It would be easier to take seriously Jenny Turner's criticisms of Cora Kaplan's *Sea Changes: Culture and Feminism* (*NS* 28 Nov.) if she had told us what the book is about. The review begins tantalisingly, indicating the scope and originality of Kaplan's work, but then descends into *ex cathedra* judgements, increasingly condescending in tone and without reference to the substantive content of the book itself.

If Turner is to be believed, *Sea Changes* has one 'useful' argument (that gender identities are unstable) which under her scrutiny, however, soon crumbles into the dustheap of 'slightly chastened humanism' and 'boring old binary oppositions'. The book's attempts to interpret the complex relations between gender, race and class earn some praise, but on further examination they also prove to be a deconstructive 'mess'. Kaplan's theorising is 'ad hoc'; her wit 'manipulative'; her autobiographical reflections 'drippy' and 'New Agey'. Strong stuff — and apparently to be taken on faith since all the reader is offered by way of exegesis is *one sentence* listing some of the topics covered in the book's essays.

No mention of the fact that the essays were written over the last decade; not so much as a gesture toward their major concern — the exploration of women's imaginative writing as a site of contesting sexual self-definitions. The political agenda which frames the entire book, Kaplan's commitment to socialist feminism as an ongoing project, is tossed out in the first paragraph.

Such reviews do no service to anyone, including their author. *Sea Changes* is a major work of feminist literary and cultural theory, characterised by an intellectual generosity from which we should all take a lesson. But even if it weren't such an important book it would still deserve the kind of thoughtful, responsible criticism which Kaplan herself writes and for which unsubstantiated opinion and verbal oneupmanship (clever or clumsy) are no substitute.

Views on Sunday

Conrad Jameson, London SW7
If I were a betting man I'd gamble unhesitatingly on John Pilger's innovative *News on Sunday* rather than the down-market me-too version that seems to be winning the day (*NS* 2 Jan.). A me-too would be too dangerous in a crowded market.

But, then, if I were a betting man, I wouldn't in fact gamble on *News on Sunday* at all. Even Pilger's version would be up against the inclination of a popular readership to judge a Sunday newspaper, not for its politics or fairness, but as a fun package that must please a whole family. Here is where the press barons really score: they can plump up the package almost at will — and note that a Sunday is especially vulnerable to a plumping-up tactic. As marketer Harry Henry proved for the *Sunday Times* in the '60s, a rich baron can have his readers still reading on a Thursday — and with little that other Sundays can do save try to match the competition.

Faced with only two alternatives, as the Rabbis' saying has it, always find a third. A third option would be to keep Pilger's innovations intact but re-wrap them in a different and more probable marketing concept: a Saturday magazine. The off-take could be slower for battling against conventional buying habits. But if it got through its launch it could be sitting pretty — and there would be precious little the barons could do about it. Meanwhile a radical Saturday magazine would be filleting what is literally the most colourful feature of the Sundays — their colour supplements — and doing so in a way that steals a leaf from the devil's own book: deliberately confusing comparisons of value.

Jim Tidy, Maidstone, Kent
John Pilger astounds me with his article. He is one of the few journalists whose name I know. In my mind he is responsible for ending the war in Vietnam, and putting starvation on the breakfast menu of the British public long before Bandaid came into fashion. Why then is he sounding off like an adolescent?

People are desperately keen for information? I doubt this. People buy a newspaper every morning from habit. How many get read, how many just get glanced at for who won the 3.30, what's on the box, what's Jane doing?

Then he assumes that the job of a newspaper is to sell news. The job of a newspaper is to make money for its owners. In order to do this it has to sell advertising. The best rates of advertising are paid on circulation and target group so it needs to grow all the time. So headlines are devised to encourage impulse buying on top of habit buying.

John Pilger is proud of his craft and is looking for a newspaper to identify with so that he can help the British public to think by telling the truth. If you want to change someone, you have to start where they are and gently expose them to ideas one by one over long periods of time.

Both sides of the fence

George Cowley, Warndon, Worcester
As a 49-year-old ex-mental patient now living in the community, I was delighted with Naseem Khan's article 'Words across the chasm' (*NS* 28 Nov). I spent 16 years in a mental hospital but I would like to do my bit in quashing the stereotypes that maintain a gulf between mental patients and the outside world.

In 1960 (not long before entering hospital) I had a four-line poem published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, and in the 1960s I won 12 prizes in *Punch* competitions, two in *Time & Tide*, and one in *Church Times*. More recently I have won almost 30 prizes in your weekend competition (one prize won, in 1968, when I was 'serving' six months in a chronic ward as a 'punishment' for taking an overdose of aspirins) and in May 1985 you printed a poem of mine. As someone who has been 'on both sides of the fence', surely the above makes it obvious that the 'divide' between the so-called mad and the sane is not so great after all?

Media bias

Tom Watkinson, Glasgow
Might I raise a peripheral point concerning the article by John Rentoul and Jolyon Jenkins on the likely political alignment of the British national press at the time of the next general election (*NS* 19/26 Dec.)?

The article suggests that complaints about anti right-wing bias [sic] in the media lodged by Conservative Central Office have been 'reliably' documented by the self-styled Media Monitoring Unit. Your readers might be interested to learn more about this supposedly 'independent' and 'unbiased' organisation. We at the Glasgow University Media Group recently obtained a copy of their weighty but cursory analysis of over 300 television current affairs programmes covering a period of one year's viewing. This analysis appears to have been conducted with the sole intention of identifying and amplifying those strands of television discourse which fall into a pre-determined and catch-all category of 'left-wing' bias. Specifically the Unit declares open support for both Norman Tebbit's attack on BBC coverage of the Libyan bombing and for the Conservative government's attempt to influence the editorial decision of the BBC concerning the screening of the Northern Ireland documentary *Real Lives* in 1985. In no possible sense can such an organisation as this be said to stand aloof from political partisanship.

Cheap jibes

Irene Bruegel, London N7 (yes, Islington)
As a politically active working mother who employs neither a nanny nor a cleaner, I have been rather too busy to respond speedily to John Rentoul's cheap jibes at women who do employ paid help (*NS* 7 Nov.). But, faced with a filthy, chaotic kitchen, children clamouring for parties, hoovering that has waited for weeks etc etc., I can contain my puzzlement no longer.

Let's start by being personal. Who does John Rentoul's cleaning and cooking? Who looks after his children? Why is it OK for me to have

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my hair done, my car serviced, my food cooked (outside the home) but not to employ a cleaner?

Yes, cleaners and nannies are poorly paid, but I think I can probably do more to change that by campaigning and supporting what organisation exists, than by slaving over my own greasy floor, or persuading my children to do so for free.

Perhaps John Rentoul would care to spend a week in my house and then advise me on the politically correct solution to my (age-old) problem? He wouldn't advise me to give up my demanding employment and take a little part-time job that suits my domestic responsibilities, now would he?

Property prices

Matthew Huntbach, London N4

Having tried in vain to find an affordable property in the part of London where I live, I have often wondered, like Ian Jack (*NS* 19/26 Dec.), who is buying all these £80,000 flats.

I find it difficult to believe the conventional explanation that it is all people in their early twenties earning £20,000 plus a year. Such people must have graduated with me in 1981 or later, and in my experience few of our generation are earning that much, certainly not enough to finance the entire London property boom.

How many of these 'yuppies' really have 100 per cent mortgages, and how many are using the proceeds from large inheritances, themselves derived from the property boom? The effect of inheritance is the most worrying aspect of the 'property owning democracy' as it must inevitably feed back on itself so that prices of ordinary houses rise to levels which require several lifetimes' accumulated savings to reach.

Mission half accomplished

Andrew Hudson, London E17

As someone who once arose early to perform 'guard duties' for Ian Williams, and who being a Tribunite at the time (now Liberal) was regarded as a reformist, I feel he has used poetic licence in his article 'About time Barclays' (*NS* 19/26 Dec.) Having campaigned to withdraw my own union branch from Barclays I welcome their withdrawal from the apartheid regime but it is in no way mission accomplished.

Ian Williams thinks that the call for the resignation of Lord Salisbury was a demand; it was in fact the main issue of the term. There was no demand to dissolve the investments to fund guerrilla groups, merely a demand that the University publish a list of its investments. This the university chancellor refused to do, giving unsatisfactory reasons at a mass meeting of students on the day the sit-in commenced. Ian was at this meeting where the University vice chancellor gave such unsatisfactory replies that a breakaway group of students unilaterally decided to occupy the senate building. A meeting called by the anti sit-in 'Association of Moderate Students' retrospectively supported it after being infiltrated by sitters-in.

There was no vote to sit in, the majority of students played no part and elected a 'moderate' President with a massive four to one majority! The sit-in was a failure, teaching the valuable lesson that it is unwise to start a confrontation without first gaining majority support. If the University has begun to follow the example of disinvesting, that is a belated gain.

The Great Defence Debate

Dr J.M. Lewis, Director, Policy Research Associates

According to the dissenting members of your editorial staff, 'if we rely on opinion polls for our guide, we know that in the recent past a majority of electors have expressed their support for . . . cancelling Trident [or] getting rid of cruise missiles' (*NS* 12 Dec.).

This claim is surprising in view of the results of the Gallup poll commissioned by Policy Research Associates and published on the eve of CND's Annual Conference last month. In answer to the question 'Do you think that Britain should or should not remove cruise nuclear missiles from this country, whether or not the Soviet Union dismantles its SS-20 nuclear missiles?' 39 per cent answered 'Should', 48 per cent answered 'Should not', and 13 per cent were undecided.

In answer to the question 'Do you think that Britain should or should not complete its current programme of building four Trident missile submarines to replace the Polaris submarines when they become obsolete in the 1990s?' 49 per cent said 'Should', 36 per cent said 'Should not', and 15 per cent were undecided.

Our customary question on unilateralism — 'Do you think Britain should or should not continue to possess nuclear weapons as long as the Soviet Union has them?' — yielded its customary result: 66 per cent answered 'Should', 27 per cent 'Should not', with 7 per cent undecided.

However unrepresentative they may be of editorial opinion at the *New Statesman*, it would seem that the Editor's views are an accurate reflection of public opinion at large.

Michael J. Jenkins, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glam

I was shocked to read Ann Clwyd's response to your editorial concerning the Labour Party's defence policy (Letters, 12 Dec.) Millions of people's lives are being shattered by unemployment (in Aberdare, in Ms Clwyd's constituency, it is 20.4 per cent). People are suffering under declining health care and education provision. They want the dignity of a job. They want their children to be educated in pleasant surroundings, with up-to-date books and materials. They want necessary medical operations to be performed within a reasonable period without being told 'But if you *pay* . . .'. They want decent bus services. They want an equitable and fair distribution of wealth in this enormously prosperous country. They want to get rid of Thatcher.

The defence policy is only part of a comprehensive manifesto, which is vital to the country and is attractive to a majority of voters. In 1983 too many in the party were only concerned in maintaining the purity of their principles, and didn't seem to care about winning the election. Our supporters cannot afford such luxury next time.

Frederic E. Lamond, London NW11

Labour would have to trim its nuclear disarmament policy far less than some revisionists propose to win a majority of the electorate to its side. Let us start with the opinion polls. Fewer than a quarter of respondents back giving up Britain's Polaris capability unilaterally, but up to 54 per cent have at times opposed the stationing of US-controlled cruise missiles and nuclear armed FX 100 bombers on British soil.

There is far more than crude jingoism in these attitudes, which reveal a greater understanding on nuclear issues than that of many politicians. The land-based *cruise missiles* and *FX 100 bombers* are accurate *first strike* nuclear weapons, that invite a *pre-emptive Soviet nuclear strike* against their well known land sites. They are thus a direct threat to the survival of the British population, and Labour could win the backing of a majority of the electorate for their *unilateral removal* from British soil within 12 months of taking power.

Thomas Carty, Newcastle, Staffs

It's understandable why unilateralism acquired its totemic role during the '80s. Justified fears in the face of an accelerated arms race coincided with a period of severe ideological and electoral defeat for the left. Unilateralism filled a vacuum. Nobody can object to CND pressing its case with the utmost vigour and demanding the whole cake. That's what pressure groups are for. But politics is usually concerned with how much of the cake you can get and the plain fact is that Labour CND supporters have sold their party short.

It would be too damaging to change horses now, though. We must head towards the electoral gunfire united behind the banner of a democratically agreed policy. But don't say you weren't warned! John Lloyd's analysis is a good starting point for the policy reassessment which will no doubt follow our electoral defeat.

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GENTLEMAN, LONDON visitor, 50s, solvent, passionate with appropriate stamina, desires London lady, preferably retired, who can be discreet yet joyous, uninhibited lover. Photo please. Box (01)4290. W1.6

GRADUATE MALE, 36, tall, slim, outgoing, sense of humour, politically central, seeks lady friend. London/Sussex. First advertisement, all letters answered. Box (02)4326. W2.14

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INDEPENDENT, SOLVENT male 48, tall, slim, needs younger sensual woman, with child potential. Box (02)4307. W2.16

IT WOULD be more fun to share some of my interests & activities with a male companion, age range 38-50, London area. I'm a woman with varied interests which include films, theatre, bird-watching. Box (02)4329. W2.17

MOONING DOWN the drawers? Thinking gardener, man 46, seeks buxom brunette with pastoral and NS pursuits in mind. Box (02)4311. W2.18

OXBRIDGE GENTLEMAN, tall, slim; married, sexagenarian, seeks friendship with mature lady whose interests, like his, include books, City and sex. Box (02)4313. W2.19

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QUESTING, BEARDED Englishman, 42, seeks tranquil, feminine companion for Spring walking holiday in Dorset. Photo appreciated and returned with mine. Box (02)4310. W2.21

QUIZZICAL, HAPPY, unattached lady, 37, looks for a clever fellow with lots of humour, curiosity and interested in art, maybe economics? Photo appreciated. London/South East. Box (02)4323. W2.22

PROFESSIONAL MAN, 42, separated, emotionally aware, well-travelled, author, enjoys conversation, films, the countryside, seeks warm, intelligent, articulate woman. London, Bristol or anywhere. Box (02)4314. W2.23

SUCCESSFUL, GENEROUS man living Knightsbridge, young 50s, seeks female company occasional fun afternoons dining, drinking champagne and enjoying good conversation. No strings, no hang-ups just mutual pleasure and happiness. Box (01)4298. W1.12

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WOODY ALLENISH cosmopolitan man, 51, London, interests include visual arts, National Trust, orientalia, Bach, stimulating conversation, Third World travel, seeks attractive, lively woman, similar tastes. Box (02)4334. W2.25

UNATTACHED, INTERESTING and interested male aged 42, seeks moderately fascinating female in Birmingham/W. Midlands. I am reasonably goodlooking, but not very, and would like to find out more about post-modernism or any other soothing topic. Box (51)4288. W51.23

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THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlet, book list, programme. Free talks or discussions, Sundays 8-9pm ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL. N40.6

AGENDA

FOR DETAILS CALL JANET BANKS 01-251 5487

Deadline: 4pm Mondays

MON 12 JAN

BENEATH THE WHITE COAT. A seminar series on Science & Politics in the 1980s organised by the British Society for the Social Responsibility in Science. The Marquis of Granby, Chandos Place, WC2. This week: Dr David Elliott 'Energy — There is an Alternative'.

HISTORY WORKSHOP: London Seminar '87. Jill Julius Matthews 'Keep Young and Beautiful': the Keep Fit Movement Between the Wars, at The White Swan (Upstairs), 14 New Row, WC2 (Leicester Sq. tube). Drinks 7 p.m. Seminar 7.30.

TUES 13 JAN

SOCIALIST SOCIETY Book of the Month meeting. John Palmer will be speaking on Socialist Foreign Policy and the prospects for non-alignment. At The Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. 8 p.m.

WOMEN & LANGUAGE. Tutor: Gerry Lander. Starts today for 12 weeks. 6-8 p.m., at the Mary Ward Centre. Details: Extra-Mural Dept, University of London, 26 Russell Sq., WC1B 5DQ. Tel. 01-636 8000 ext. 3853/72.

WED 14 JAN

THE CONTINUUM CONCEPT. Lecture by Jean Liedloff. Ample time for discussion. 7 p.m., Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1. Adm. £3. Details: Stella Barclay 01-346 6515.

THURS 15 JAN

BRITISH MARXISM in the 80s: issues and perspectives. Tutor: Peter Osborne, 6.30 p.m. at Morley College. Details: Extra-Mural Dept, University of London, 26 Russell Sq., WC1B 5DQ. Tel. 01-636 8000 ext. 3853/72.

CONFERENCE

TELEVISION & THE FAMILY: A New Agenda. 25/26 February. Conference at Institute of Education, London. Contact: Janet Willis, BFI on 01-437 4355 for details.

AGENDA
£5 for 25 words plus 30p extra words (inc VAT)

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BACKCHAT

WINE

Oaky noses

Stephen Brook

BROWSING THROUGH *The Macdonald Guide to French Wines* I came across the following tasting notes: 'A wine some would say smelt like a vestry; others might suggest an Oriental fragrance.' 'Characteristic bouquet, reminiscent of the neighbouring pine forest.' 'Beautiful garnet colour with biscuity glints.'

It is tasting notes such as these that give wine writing a bad name. I have no idea what an Oriental fragrance could be, nor what makes a glint biscuity. None of the vintages of Ch Bastor-Lamontagne that I have tasted smells anything like a pine forest and, if it did, I wouldn't drink it.

It is easy to scoff at pretentious writing about wine, but far more difficult to describe a wine effectively. For just as there is a philosophical conundrum about 'other minds' so there is a gustatory puzzle about 'other tastes'. A wine that tastes rounded to you may taste bland to me; a glass that reeks of raspberries to me may suggest strawberry jam to you. Even if we agree that a wine 'has an oaky nose and is fleshy but firm on the palate', there is no way we can be sure that our experience of the wine is identical.

Unambiguous words that can be used to describe a wine are few and far between. Colours can be agreed upon. You may call the wine amber, I may call it deep gold and Hugh Johnson may call it copper-coloured, but we're all envisaging more or less the same thing. There is also a wide measure of agreement that, for example, young port tastes peppery, or that certain wines have an exceptionally long (or short) finish. Then too there are technical terms that may mystify the uninitiated but that do relate to the mechanics of winemaking. A reasonably experienced sniffer and taster should be able to detect long ageing of a wine in new oak; excessive acidity and alcohol are also discernible. The distinction between soft and hard tannins may be almost impossible to explain, but after a few dozen glasses of young claret the difference becomes tangible.

Such technicalities may strike readers as needlessly abstruse, but they have an analytical function that is valuable. To note, in the case of most red wines, the degrees of tannin, concentration of flavour, acidity and fruitiness is to assemble data essential for the assessment of a wine. If these various elements are present in a coherent manner, we can speak of a balanced wine, a wine with structure that is likely to develop well as the years go by.

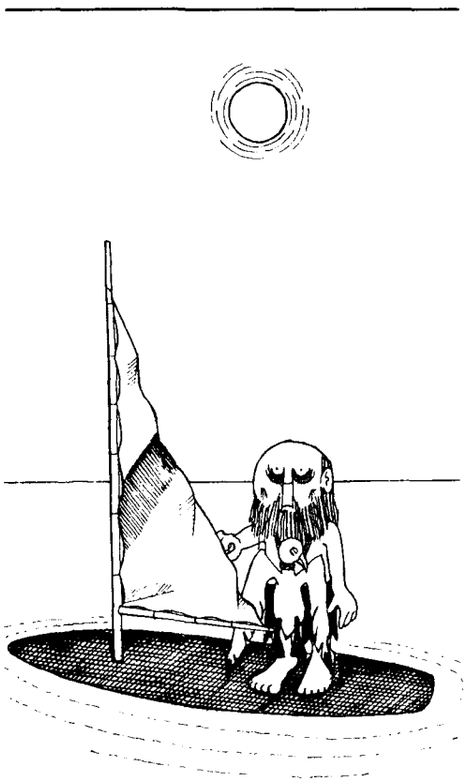
But most descriptive writing about wine, especially in France, concentrates on the subjective impression the wine makes on the taster, and it's this that is dangerous. It can lead to the vacuous excesses quoted above and to a search for ever more obscure analogies. When the French author of the *Macdonald Guide* notes that a wine is 'rich in the mouth with spicy overtones of venison and leather', I am mystified. I know what leather smells like but am not in the habit of chewing it. Nor can I accept that there is a taste that can be precisely called 'venison'; moreover, any wine that did taste even remotely of venison should be regarded with suspicion. The French tasters detect in a fine Bonnezeaux 'classic scents of lime flowers, acacia, honey and crystallized fruit'. A Jurancon evokes scents of guava. In the course of the book every market stall in France is ransacked for analogies.

This is, in my view, deeply unhelpful. Such ultra-refinement of the nose and palate is, finally, little more than showing off. The error is in trying to convey so exactly what a wine tastes like. It is foolish to attempt such precision. What I want to know about a wine includes *roughly* what it looks, smells and tastes like, but I also want to know more. A tasting note should not be merely a transcribed memory; it should be a prognostication, an analysis and an educated guess at the wine's future development in bottle. It should give an indication of the style of the wine, whether it is full-flavoured or lean and delicate, whether it is typical of the region or grape variety, whether it is intense and assertive or ripe and rounded.

Finally, I like a dash of good old value judgment. Here too vocabulary is in inevitable conflict with subjectivity, but enthusiasms and disappointments are worth conveying. I like to know whether the taster considers the wine to be elegant or overblown, voluptuous or astringent, tired or vigorous, dreary or sensational.

The modest art of the wine writer is to convey all this in a few lines. Only when the descriptive and analytical groundwork has been laid should the writer indulge in flights of fancy. How perilous the fanciful impressionistic style of wine writing can be was perfectly illustrated in a recent article by a very experienced taster, Serena Sutcliffe, in which she flamboyantly but effectively described a Burgundy as 'a country gentleman rather than a town smoothie' but came a cropper when she wrote of 'a riveting rhapsody on a theme — a vinous Rachmaninov or Paganini'.

Now that I have clarified the rules of the game, I look forward to ignoring them in future columns. □



NB

FIRST PERSON

Daydream believers

Jeremy Harding

I DOUBT WHETHER anyone besides me has such tedious daydreams that REM sleep follows within moments of the opening scene. I would like to sell the idea that real dreams are a better proposition than daydreams. Marx referred scornfully to the Jacobins as daydreamers. In politics, the slur is about wishful thinking and its results in the public domain. Real dreams never pose this problem. The dreamer is normally harmless when dreaming and the dream itself is a strictly private viewing. Although, of course, when the lights go up, we are always free to describe the feature to someone else.

Last week at my own seedy local theatre, I dreamed I was plastering the head of a celebrated right-wing US congressman with L'Oréal Free Style Hair Mousse. Two expressionless aides sat on either side of his desk, lobbing a remote-control video wand back and forth to each other across the room. The congressman spoke at length in a monotone about a burning issue. Eventually he rose from the desk, his dank hair trailing around his ears, and seized the wand from a silent aide. 'This is one programme,' he began decisively, and abandoned his sentence in midstream, stuffing the wand into a trouser pocket as he left the room.

And so to the credits. The origin of the mousse is clear enough. It stands on the bathroom shelf and revives the flat-top haircut of my youngest housemate every morning. Nor is the gesture of styling a politician's hair all that mysterious. It says much about the actual business of interviewing the good and the great — and there was no doubt that the congressman in my dream was the very same party who, in waking life, had kindly agreed to fit an interview with me into his hectic 'fall schedule' back in October.

It took longer to get a sense of the video wand. But now I have it, and I like it. I like its casual suggestion that access to information is a magical property — a notion that may yet revive our flagging interest in information itself, as it proliferates like dust, without difference or distinction. Politicians and journalists should all have tiny video wands emblazoned on their foreheads.

As it turned out, my waking-life congressman's

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dust was very interesting. He bestowed two generous handfuls that must surely come as news to most people. The first — and he had all the dust on southern Africa — was that the ANC enjoyed the support of only 5,000 to 6,000 South Africans. There was therefore no reason to talk to them. Besides, he added, the ANC was a 'tool of the Soviet Union'.

The second concerned the logic of US support for Jonas Savimbi, the Angolan contra who has turned a debatable ethnic grievance into a total mishmash of opportunism. 'What we're trying to do,' explained my congressman, 'is to free a country which has been enslaved by the communists and which is currently a puppet of the Soviet Union.'

Jonas Savimbi, highly praised by my congressman and others, is a figure whose hair has had a lot of styling recently. He hired the Virginian PR team, Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly, to package his insurgency for the American public and took to Washington like a duck to water on his visit in early 1986. In Washington Savimbi sought support from several sources besides the administration itself. His most inspired venture was an excursion into the world of postage stamps. On his visit he met up with an entrepreneur from Florida by the name of Marc Rousso, who had produced a set of 'freedom stamps' for one of the Afghan mujahedin factions, with lucrative results for his clients.

Savimbi commissioned a series of UNITA freedom stamps which were to be sold by subscription to his hard-core following in the USA, and also to collectors who would buy them for their rarity value. The price of a subscription to all 12 issues was set at $180. Midway through last year over 20,000 subscribers were thought to be on Rousso's list.

That is so much loose change to UNITA. But the stamps are all part of the moussing that puts the word around. Some strange bedfellows have had the same idea of rallying international support, including the Norwegian resistance, the exiled *ancien régime* of post-war Romania, the Biafran secession and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Naturally my congressman is in favour of the UNITA stamps. 'Many sets,' he says, 'will be used as postage for letters that proclaim UNITA's struggle.' Perhaps this is poetic license. Or perhaps he genuinely believes that the vast majority of the stamps are not travelling in cellophane packs direct from Rousso's company in Florida to thousands of US collectors.

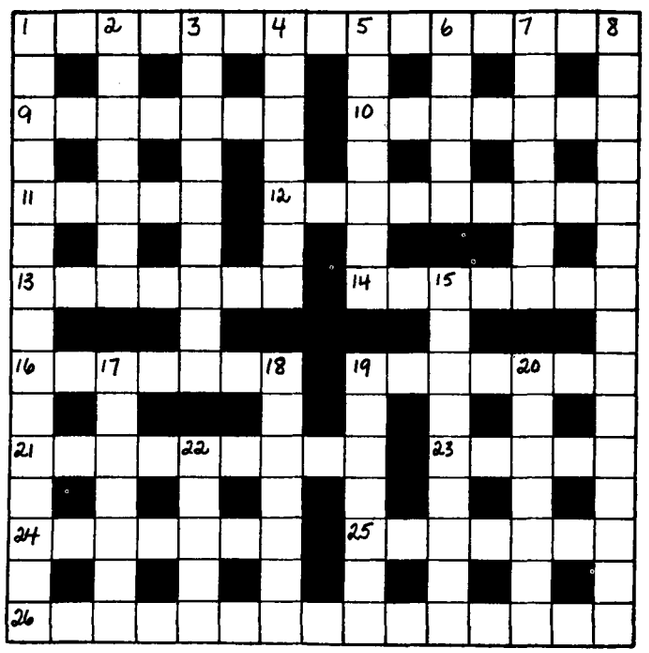
That would mean my congressman was susceptible to daydreams. Daydreams, no doubt, with all too familiar and palpable consequences, from Indochina to central America to southern Africa. And therein lies the problem. Every time an imaginary struggle erupts from the fantasy to qualify the course of actual events, the real world starts to fill with the faint but ominous noises of dust being swept into presentable piles and wind rustling the position papers on the daydreamer's desk.

Maybe it would not be such a bad thing if more people dozed off at the onset of their daydreams or even during their rinse and set. The world would probably become a safer place. From the corridors of power to the land of nod is a hallowed step, as anyone who watches televised sessions in the House of Lords will know.

My congressman and his associates could embark on the long, untroubled sleep of the just without dishonour, and leave their aides to process the volumes of mail arriving daily from rebel-held Angola. □

Weekend Crossword 1543

PRIZE: £10 Book Token for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Crossword 1543, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 20 January.



ACROSS

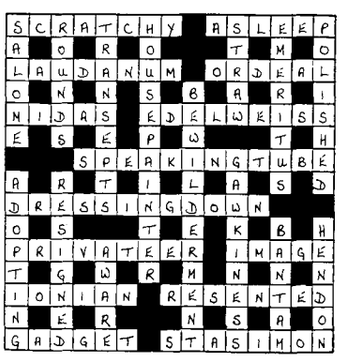
1. Putting things off might produce scorn in a patriot (15)
9. State I value after having me back (7)
10. Proving that movement of club goes about half a hole (7)
11. Draft of legislation about river fish (5)
12. I get involved with a fool after a drink in the minister's office (9)
13. Tear about holding a horse or bird (7)
14. Reds change to have dinner and put on their best clothes (5,2)
16. Automatic with which to commit crime with one among the apprentice soldiers (7)
19. Infuriated about irregular soldiers or one wo challenges bull (7)
21. No parent fails to tell the truth at the end of these irregularities (9)
23. Racing driver goes right into place of victory (5)
24. Like a rainbow (7)
25. Wonder of nature gives an artist profit in return (7)
26. Attractive guide (8,7)

DOWN

1. Give me brainy priests for conversion to this religion (15)
2. Without the bulb the view would be good (7)
3. Red but backward-looking, a peer among tories (9)
4. It goes over or under the rails (7)
5. Having cover may make side run (7)
6. Reserved as a man about his loves (5)
7. They sound like unstarted vehicles, the cold things (7)
8. Songs of pure origins last heard in a different ending (5,10)
15. The emanation may go to a thousand places (9)
17. Show disapproval of monarch with reservations (7)
18. A letter against wine (7)
19. Mother and child in charge of order (7)
20. Exhibition of pictures showing the artist relative to the historian (7)
22. Go up for more (5)

SETSQUARE

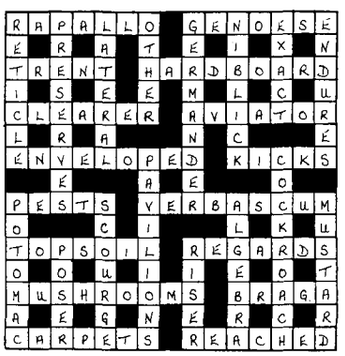
Solution to 1540



Prizewinner to 1540

Mrs M. Thomes
(Westerham, Kent)

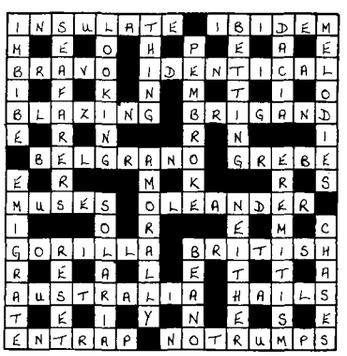
Solution to 1541



Prizewinner to 1541

Adrian Hindle
(Liverpool)

Solution to 1542



Prizewinner to 1542

V. Wood
(Saltburn, Cleveland)

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Weekend competition

No 2957 **Set by Gray Dorn**

You might think nothing could be worse than the original, but *Winnie-the-Pooh* lovers everywhere are outraged by a new translation sponsored by the Polish Ministry of Culture — which has feminised Pooh into Fredzia Phi-Phi and turned his woodland comrades into 'a bunch of imbeciles'. Wanted: excerpts from state-approved Eastern European adaptations/mistranslations of this or other British children's classics. 150 words maximum, please, by Wednesday 14 January.

No 2954 **Set by Gray Dorn**

Sun articles on postmodernism, following the example of the *Guardian*'s recent series.

Report **By Gray Dorn**

Most readers have probably already forgotten the *Guardian*'s series — certainly that paper's arts critics must be hoping that their contributions won't be remembered. Few of them understood the philosophical, political and social transformations covered by the term: few of you did either. A pity, because the names of some of pm's better known theorists — Virilio, Lyotard, Faye, Baudrillard — would have been a gift to any decent *Sun* writer. And a shame you stuck to 'leaders' — I was hoping for a few features: Is *your* child a postmodernist — ten tell-tale signs', that kind of thing. But you *did* know your *Sun* (sorry, *Suns*) and these are well worth £8 apiece. Eschewing any archaic unificatory or homogenising impluse, I've allowed multiple spellings of the key word.

Remember the time when stories had a beginning, a middle, and an end?

In that order.

Remember when the eyes of a portrait used to follow you round the room?

Remember Shakespeare? Dickens? *Dixon of Dock Green*?

If you do, there's news for you.

YOU'RE PAST IT!

At least, that's what the new commissars of culture are saying.

THEY SAY the only good story is a story about stories.

THEY SAY a painting's no good if it appeals to common sense.

THEY SAY Dennis Potter's got it right.

And who are these fancy customers with letters after their names?

A PACK OF CHARLIES.

Britain doesn't need their theories any more than it needs AIDS.

Who wants to import disease?

Three things made Britain great. A strong navy. The white race. And narrative closure.

Don't let's throw them away.

THE *SUN* SAYS: COME OFF IT!

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

In this week's soaraway *SUN*, how it's AM for PM!

Yes! It's official!! Now you DON'T have to be an egghead to be a culture-vulture!!!

The buzz-word is POST-MODERNISM.

That's right!

But you don't have to be able to spell it to do it!

In this sizzling *SUN* feature, we start sorting out the post-mods from the cons! Ready?!!

*ART — no need to dump shapeless lumps of clay about any more.

There's nothing wrong with the flying ducks.

*FILM — no more of that foreign stuff that makes you square-eyed just squinting at the sub-titles!

Who's for a hint of a glint from Clint instead?

*MUSIC — remember the mods and rockers? *Now it's the post-mods, okay?* Their values are trad, but their old is NEW!

Grab a 78, and give it a spin!

*THEATRE — no more loony lefties on training schemes. Their plays about miners are the pits now!

It's back to Aladdin at the Palace!

The *SUN* says: Bring back the Empire!

* TELEVISION — Never mind the knockers, keep your fingers on the buttons!

There's no *Play For Today* in the Post-Mod tomorrow!

Soap is safe!!

The *SUN* says: We're Forever Blowing Bubbles!

MORE AMAZING POST-MOD MESSAGES IN YOUR SENSATIONAL *SUN* TOMORROW!!!!!!

Because, WE SAY, in true Cockney spirit, 'OME IS WHERE YER ART IS!

WILL BELLENGER

Writer John Fowles found himself up a gum tree when he reached the climax of his sexy novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. He just couldn't decide between two equally sizzling endings! He SCRATCHED his head. He STROKED his bushy beard. Finally he had a brainwave — why not put both in? 'Why should we writers always call the shots?' demands John with a twinkle. 'I offered my readers a genuine choice — and believe it or not my book became a bumper best seller!'

Kinky gay novelist William Burroughs went even further. 'I got fed up with writing every page myself,' explains William. 'I like the lolly writing brings in — who wouldn't? — but not the hard graft. So I thought, why not cut up lines from other books and mags and sort of stick them all together?'

John's teasing endings and Bill's scissors-and-paste job have won acclaim from literary eggheads like Professor John Smith of Cambridge University. 'These are good examples of the fictive method of many post-modern authors,' burbles the brainy Prof. 'Postmodernism characteristically displays a ludic sense of irony.'

Hold on! Ludic? Doesn't he do *Did You See* on the telly? Beg pardon, Prof — we think the word you want is BLOODY LUDICROUS!

PETER NORMAN

POSTMODERNISM is the latest barmy fad to hit the fan and what a turn-up for decent folk.

Modern so-called art was bad enough but now we have postmodernism. What a mouthful, what rubbish.

Architect Richard Rogers, postmodernist or whatever, is the latest to toss a jumble of scrap metal in the public's face.

He designed, if that is the word, the new Lloyd's building, that *excrescence* just round the corner from our beloved Old Lady of Threadneedle Street.

YOU CAN'T MISS IT — it hits you in the face like a beer-can at a Leeds United Match.

LOONY LLOYD'S

Yes, *Lloyds of London*, and how they have ratted on their fine tradition, now they have their drains and wiring in full view.

What a stupid, VULGAR idea, like a chap exposing his private parts in your lounge.

When shall we return to the sanity of old Chris Wren and all that is fine in the British tradition?

Who wants these foreign ideas? Not the man or woman in the street with their sound common sense.

It's the soppy LAYABOUTS and POSERS in our universities and academics.

Clear them out, before it's too late.

PETER ALEXANDER

The *SUN* has one word for postmodernism: BALONEY. We aren't afraid to say: up yours Colin McCabe and your whole tribe of BBC Marxists, pansies and poseurs.

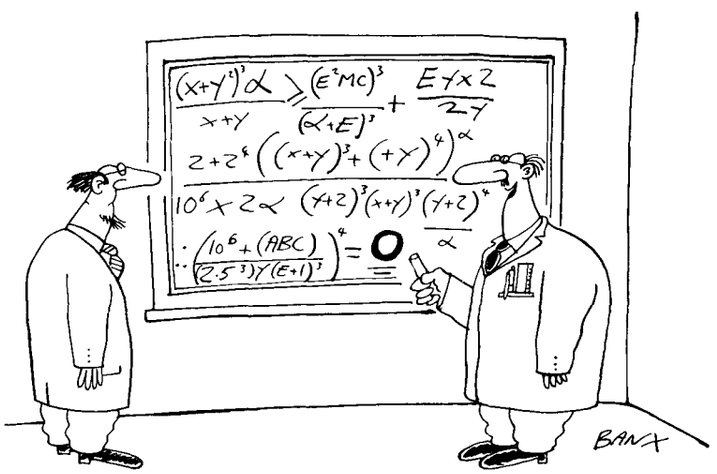
What some of these over-educated nancy-boys have failed to grasp is that ordinary people want plots, characters and action. Up and down the country they are saying enough is enough.

Apart from his support for the strong government of Mussolini, which the *SUN* admires, who reads Ezra Pound? Who reads filthy, obscene books like *Ulysses*? Excuse me, but who gives a damn about J. Alfred Prufrock?

The modernists are rejected by all decent people and the postmodernists will go the same way. Into the scrap-metal crusher of history.

Make no mistake, the British people are voting with their feet and turning their backs on the rancid stew of postmodernism. They know that a foreigner with a name like Umberto Eco should be stuffing cannelloni, not telling English people what to think about the arts. The *SUN* says: send the postmodernists back home where they belong.

NICHOLAS MURRAY



'Done it Harcourt, I've invented the Bomb.'

Incorporating 'The Nation', 'The Athenaeum' and 'The Week-end Review'. Registered as a newspaper. Typesetting by Tocatta Graphics, Tabard House, 116 Southwark Street, London SE1 Printed by QB Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester CO3 3LJ. Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co. Ltd at 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

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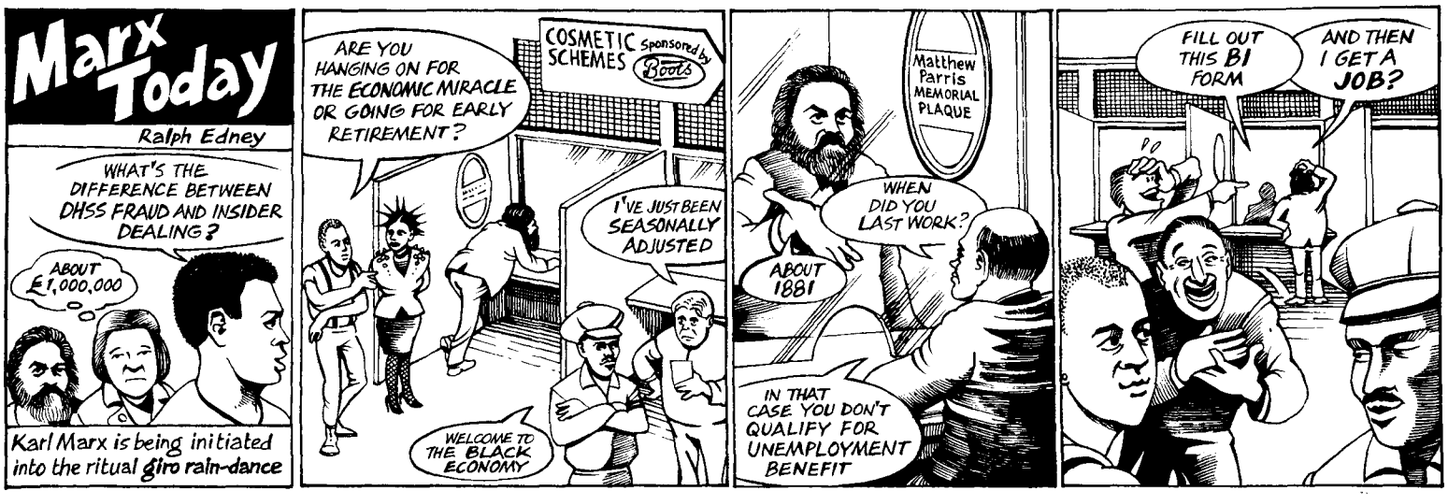
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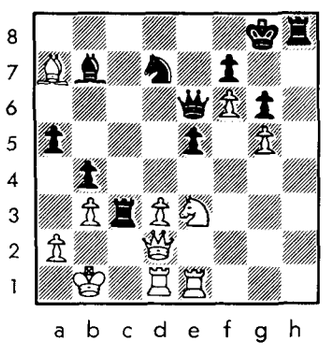
Chess



THE DIAGRAM gives the position after Black's 31st move in **Short-Kasparov** from last month's tournament in Brussels. This was the game that Short won. (Before dwelling on it, we had better stop to acknowledge that Kasparov won the whole tournament and his other game against Nigel.) White is threatened by an enemy outpost at c3, whilst the pawn at f6 puts Black's King in constant jeopardy. You might think that White's stray Bishop on a7 and isolated pawn on d3 would tip the balance towards Black. But a very important factor in White's favour is that his advanced pawns on the K-side prevent the Black Rooks from working together. Short uses this plus to begin an invasion down the c-file: **32. Rc1! Qa6** Although this picks up the trapped Bishop, it seems a shame to lose the b4 pawn. There was a case for 32 . . . Rxc1 + when e.g. 33. Rxc1 Qa6 34. Rc7 Rh1 + 35. Kb2 Nf8 and Black is doing well. **33. Rxc3 bxc3 34. Qxc3 Qxa7 35. Qc7 Qd4** Does he have to return the piece? Why not 35 . . . Nf8? White can reply 36. Nd5! Qf2 37. Ne7 + Kh7 38. Rc1!. Perhaps not entirely clear, but the problems of staving off mate in the h-file and defending f7 appear to be too much for the Black pieces to cope with — e.g. 38 . . . Bf3 39. Nf5 Bd5 40. Rh1 + . **36. Qxb7 Qxd3 + 37. Nc2 Rh2** White's tactical operations have succeeded in exchanging the weak d3 pawn for the strong b4 pawn and exposing Black's tender back rank. But the Black pieces are very active and Short has had to surrender his own second rank. **38. Qc8 + Nf8?** Loses for sure. But would 38 . . . Kh7 have held the game? White can try 39. Qc4 with the idea that the c-pawn can be very fast after 39 . . . Qxc4 40. bxc4, when the safest line for Black is 40 . . . Rd2!. **39. Rxe5 Rh1 + 40. Kb2 Qd2 41. Re8 Qd6** It's vital that after 41 . . . Qc1 + 42. Kc3 the White Queen controls h3. **42. Rd8 Qe5 + 43. Ka3 Kh7 44. Rxf8 Qd6 + 45. b4 1-0.**

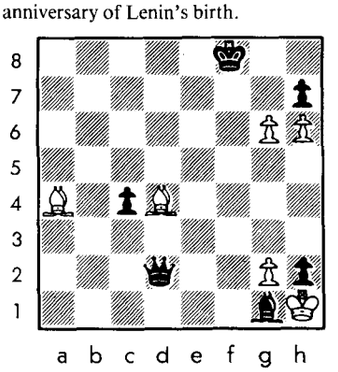
To let a point slip like this was an unusual piece of generosity from Kasparov. Perhaps he does have the welfare of his fellow GMs at heart, as instanced in a recent proposal to form a Grandmasters' Association.

There certainly was a time when they needed some organisation to look after their interests. Little things, like seeing to it that they didn't starve to death. Grim evidence for this can be found in some of the obituaries in the recently published anthology *British Chess Magazine 1923-1932*. Yates was more or less destitute when a gas leak ended his life at the age of 46 in 1932. The anthology reproduces an appeal for contributions to meet the expenses of his funeral and his rent arrears. In 1926 we find a correspondent explaining that Janowski was in the final stages of tuberculosis when he turned up to play in a tournament. The tournament organiser charitably paid for his bed in a nursing home and for his funeral.

The emphasis in the *BCM* anthology is on personalities, reminiscences and historical curiosities rather than games. It left me puzzling over two things: 1) What happened to Morphy's chessmen? and 2) Can Ruskin really have been such a fool? The chessmen were the solid gold and silver pieces, made by Tiffany's and presented to Paul Morphy when he returned in triumph to New York in 1859. A little note on them ends with the intriguing instruction: 'The chessmen should now be looked for in France'. Ruskin's feebleness at chess seems to be amply attested by the annotations in a book that once belonged to him. Well, everyone's entitled to be a fool about something. Unfortunately, I can't bring myself to excuse Ruskin under this general amnesty, since he apparently took himself to be a connoisseur.

Problem

White to play and draw. A study composed by Nadareishvili in 1970 for a competition to mark the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth.



Solution

1. g7 + Kf7 2. Be8 + Kg8 3. Bc6! Qa5 3 . . . Qxd4 4. Bd5 + Qxd5 stalemate is the theme. 4. Bc5! Qd8 5. Bd6 Qg5 6. Be5 Qd2 7. Bd4 and draws.

George Botterill

New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU
Tel: 01-253 2001/Editorial: 01-253 2003
Telex: 28449/Cables: Newstat, London EC1
© 1987 Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd & contributors
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd
Distributed by NS Distribution

Editor: John Lloyd; **Books and Arts Editor:** Harriett Gilbert; **Writers:** Sarah Benton, Duncan Campbell, Jane Dibblin, Rob Edwards (Scotland), Patrick Forbes, Peter Kellner (Political Editor), Andrew Lumsden (Associate Editor), John Rentoul; **Deputy Books & Arts Editor:** Malcolm Imrie; **Poetry Editor:** Hugo Williams; **Production Manager:** Joanne Hurst; **Art Editor:** Vicky Hutchings; **Editorial Assistant:** Jane Thomas

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Subscription rates: UK & Eire £40; Europe (air mail only £46); rest of world: air speeded £51; air mail £61. USA: air speeded $70; air mail $85. Canada: air speeded Can $90; air mail Can $115.

Second class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc. (US Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to New Statesman, Speedimpex USA Inc., 45-45 39th Street, Long Island City, NY 11104)

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This England

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☐ From the window of their country cottage a couple watched Princess Anne distributing logs to the 'needy'. When their turn came the couple accepted their Royal gift graciously and then told a shocked princess: 'We don't actually have a log fire — central heating actually. But coming from you, Ma'am, the logs will make a super Christmas present for our neighbours back home in Chelsea.' *Daily Express* (George Moor)

☐ The Crisis at Christmas charity failed to elicit a gift of old clothes from the Archbishop of Canterbury who, when asked to contribute clothing to the appeal for the homeless, said: 'I am still wearing them.' — *The Times* (Leonard Cox)

☐ Mr Williams said he finally marched the children out when the heroine began taking her clothes off and it seemed she was going to have sex with the duck. But the manager of the Filmcenta cinema in Swansea, Mr Brian Bull, said: 'Mr Williams over-reacted. The film has no bad language and there are no topless women. The kids were loving it, some were even trying to get back in.' — *Wolverhampton Express and Star* (Derek Morgan)

☐ Military police were offered mince pies and mulled wine when they arrived to eject peace protestors from RAF Chilwell, near Nottingham. They declined the offer and arrested 16 people. — *The Independent* (Leonard Cox)

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